

On the conditions of the possibility for transcending the capitalist nation state in Chiapas,  
Mexico: a Karatanian analysis

Research Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation *with research  
distinction* in the undergraduate colleges of The Ohio State University

by

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November 2012

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## ABSTRACT

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Abstract: This research brings the thought of philosopher Kojin Karatani to bear on a social movement in southern Mexico. Karatani analyzes the modern social formation as the result of three modes of exchange – reciprocity of gift and return, plunder and redistribution, and commodity exchange – which combine to form the capitalist nation state. Through the examination of Kant's moral imperative, Karatani contends that so long as we live within the confines of the capitalist nation state, we will treat others merely as a means to an end. Yet as Karatani illustrates, Kant's 'kingdom of ends' could only be achieved through the transcendence of the capitalist nation state—a condition that seems impossible. My thesis argues that the Zapatistas of Chiapas provide a living political illustration of the struggle to transcend the capitalist nation state. Zapatismo challenges the continued exploitation and inequality that the capitalist nation state engenders through the creation of autonomous regions (called caracoles). By building communal organization, the caracoles have developed autonomous education, health, and justice programs. The Zapatista movement calls on civil society to join them in creating a world of many worlds. Through its faith in the transcendence of the capitalist nation state the EZLN (*Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*) nourishes a different type of social formation, which Karatani calls association.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Joel Wainwright. Two years ago, I was inspired by Professor Joel Wainwright's *The Making of the Modern World* course. I could not have asked for a more compassionate advisor, evidenced in the way Professor Wainwright consistently asked how I was doing before preceding to discuss my research. Professor Wainwright is patient and kind; he regularly listened to my apprehensions, helping me to work through these inhibitions. Professor Wainwright is brilliant. I learned so much through his constructive feedback in our countless meetings. Professor Wainwright, thank you for your unwavering support.

This research was made possible thanks to the funding from the Undergraduate Research Office; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts and Humanities at the Ohio State University.

Professors Mathew Coleman, Ignacio Corona, Mary Thomas, and Joel Wainwright you may not be aware of it, but your classes influenced my research. Thank you for pushing me to keep thinking.

Ann Cheng, thank you for your moral support throughout this process, sharing ideas, and listening when I am stressed. Jane Cheng, thank you for your ceaseless belief in me.

Ezequiel Ferraris, you continue to challenge my ideas and take the time to discuss philosophers/theories that I have not yet explored. Thanks for your love and devotion.

Dugan Meyer, you were excited about my ideas and proposal to do research since the start. This enthusiasm remained a constant through my research. I deeply appreciate your encouragement.

I appreciate the assistance that the librarians at EcoSur and Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología (CIESAS) provided me in finding many of the sources used in this research.

Alison Abbott, Marco Antonio, Silvana Carrizo, Diana Franco, Eduardo Gomez, Linda Haskell, Mercedes Moline, Liliana Montiel, Brian Pace, Diego Pazzelli, Hector Pinedo, and Lauriano Rodriguez, a sincere thank you for your friendship and support in San Cristobal de las Casas.

La hermana Edit, many of the folks who attended the weekly 'charlas' at CIDECI-Universidad de la Tierra, and those I had the pleasure of meeting in La Garrucha, thanks for opening your hearts and homes to me.

A profound thank you to Andrew and Janis Kartal. I am the product of 22 years of your love, dedication, and support.

## INTRODUCTION

“Vamanos Rebekah, vamos a recoger guayabas!” they called out excitedly. I ran quickly to keep up with Sofia, Leo, Alba, David and Natalia as they showed me to the guava trees. Seeing that I would not be able to climb high enough, I watched from below as they scurried high up into the trees to pick the ripest guavas. “Rebe, ya tengo mi camiseta llena ven con tu bolsa,” Leo yelled down to me. I rushed over and held my bag open to catch the guavas that he passed down to me. He then rushed to find more ripe ones. From then on, I busily ran from tree trunk to tree trunk as the children all called to me when they could not hold onto their guavas any longer. They unloaded them into my bag and then happily continued their search for more guavas. After twenty minutes they unanimously decided that they had picked enough guavas, and given how heavy my bag was at this point, I agreed. “Ven, en el suelo Rebe, ahora vamos a repartirlos,” said Alba. We sat in a circle and the kids then explained that I was to pour all the guavas onto the ground and then give each one of them a pair of guavas (one bigger one accompanied by one smaller one).

I panicked. Oh no, I thought, the arguments are going to start now. Before beginning to deal the guavas out I took a deep breath and imagined all of the fights that were bound to ensue. *Why did you give her a better pair of guavas than you gave me or What? This is not fair, I collected way more guavas than he did, so I should get more.* The kids I babysat in Ohio would surely have had these fights, as would my cousins and I when we were younger. Despite my fears, I decided to follow their instructions and figured I would deal with disagreements as they emerged. While dealing out the guavas, I heard no argument. I continued distributing the guavas around the circle multiple times

until all of the guavas were shared between all of the children. Next as we sat and bit into the fresh guavas, a few younger kids—too young to climb the trees—came around asking for a guava. Seemingly without much thought, Sofia, Leo, Alba, David and Natalia all gave up a few guavas to the younger children, who were not yet able to pick the guavas for themselves.

After starting my research at the Ohio State University, I traveled to Chiapas, Mexico for six weeks to continue my study of the Zapatista movement. While living in San Cristobal de las Casas I executed my research of Zapatismo through focused readings. Toward the end of my trip I traveled to La Garrucha, one of the autonomous Zapatista communities, where proceeded to learn through participant observation. When describing my experience picking guavas with the children in La Garrucha to family and friends, I struggled to convey why I was so struck by the children's generosity. "How nice, it sounds like the Mexicans have a better culture than we do when it comes to raising kids," my friend Sarah said nonchalantly. After months of focused reading on both the political philosophy of Kojin Karatani and the Zapatista movement, Sarah's comment frustrated me; it seemed reductionist because it trivialized the Zapatista's way of life as something merely cultural. Then I began to ask myself, what was it about this experience in La Garrucha that was so remarkable to me? Was I, too, romanticizing the Zapatista movement?

This very question of orientalism has stuck with me throughout my research. Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said, is "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" (1979, 1). Before starting my research I felt a deep anxiety because I agree with Said's statement

that “[a]nyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or is general aspects, is an orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism”

(2). No matter how I tried to make sense of my research, I could not ignore the fact that I would form a part of the long line of academics that produce knowledge of the Other, rendering this same Other voiceless. Through this process of classification, the Occident objectifies the Orient. Thus, despite the fact that I tried to be as thorough as possible while researching, I do not want my audience to equate rigorous research with objectivity. As the researcher, I chose how to organize the information in this thesis, which details to include, how to analyze the data, and so on. Additionally, the information that I gathered was used to answer a particular question, one I defined before beginning my research. Ergo, the author can never be removed from her research; it is dangerous to think that she has the ability to produce objective knowledge.

In this research I strive to better comprehend Kojin Karatani’s political philosophy through the examination of the Zapatista movement, as well as attain an improved understanding of Zapatismo by applying Karatani’s theories to the movement. In this thesis I will argue that, through its faith in the transcendence of the capitalist nation state, the EZLN (*Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*) nourishes a type of social formation that Karatani calls association. For Karatani association is the transcendence of the capitalist nation state. He envisions association as a regulative idea, that which would compel us toward a society that is both free and reciprocal. However, striving towards associationism poses a great challenge because capital is expansionary, requiring the absorption of pre-capitalist spaces for its survival (Wainwright 2012). As a

consequence, it seems impossible to find spaces that have not been violently transformed by capital. I ask: is it necessary to change our current social formation? Moreover, is it possible to imagine humans transcending the nation, state, and capital at the same time?

To examine these questions, in Chapter 1, I will draw on the thoughts of political philosopher Kojin Karatani through his book entitled *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* (2003). Karatani theorizes the modern social formation—nation, state and capital—through three modes of exchange that interlock to form a Borromean ring. Despite the triadic, mutually-reinforcing strength that the capitalist nation state possesses, Karatani argues that we should maintain the faith in transcendence because the capitalist nation state becomes troublesome from an ethical perspective and engenders environmental degradation. Next, in Chapter 2, I examine a social movement that has been resisting the absorption of the capitalist nation state: the Zapatista movement of Chiapas, Mexico. The capitalist nation state has depended on slavery and colonization of the indigenous Mayan people of Chiapas since its inception. Ergo the Zapatistas are fighting against a capitalist nation state that is set against them. Through their demand of autonomy, the Zapatistas are directly challenging the hegemonic state project that has excluded them for years. In the conclusion, I will bring Karatani's philosophy to bear on the Zapatista movement to better understand the motives of Zapatismo as well as utilize the Zapatista movement to more deeply comprehend Karatani's philosophy.



## CHAPTER 1

1.

Karatani emphasizes the importance of rereading Marx to understand that his analysis in *Capital* went beyond historical materialism. Examining Kant's aesthetic critique, Karatani explains that we are forced to bracket (2003, 40). In order to understand a concept we are forced to isolate ideas, we cannot understand all ideas at once in their totality. Dorothy Emmet explains that abstraction is essential for understanding to occur because "[w]e cannot deal with a reality in all its aspects and all its complexity" (1994, 4). In reading Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, she further describes that our comprehension depends on the reduction of representations to an objective classification of these representations (12). For example, Karatani explains that "[m]odern science was established by bracketing moral and aesthetic judgments" (2003, 114). Similarly, Karatani argues that in *Capital* Marx bracketed two modes of exchange, namely reciprocity of gift and return (mode of exchange A), and plunder and redistribution (mode of exchange B), to focus his examination on commodity exchange (mode of exchange C) (2008, 584).

Karatani analyzes the capitalist nation state through modes of exchange. The first type of exchange (A) to come into existence is reciprocity of gift and return, which occurs within communities (Karatani 2008, 574). While this form of exchange is reciprocal, it can never be free because those receiving the gift will feel indebted unless they return a gift (Karatani 2003, 202). Mauss notes that in a potlatch "[t]he obligation to reciprocate worthily is imperative...[t]he punishment for failure to reciprocate is slavery for debt" (1990, 42). It is important to note that archaic societies were either forced to

create their own state against other states or would be drawn into an already existing state (Karatani 2008, 578).

Plunder and redistribution (mode of exchange B) takes place between communities (Ibid. 575). This type of exchange is neither free nor reciprocal. The redistribution can be found occurring through taxation and programs provided in the welfare state. Karatani argues that plunder cannot be maintained without the state protecting the plundered (2003, 13). Redistribution only occurs so that more plundering can take place (202). The plundered sees it necessary to pay taxes to the state in return for protection and services that the government provides. To understand the state, Karatani examines the modern monarchical state, which is essential because in this stage the political and economic merged for the first time; "...the absolutist monarchy supported the activities of merchant bourgeoisie, and at the same time was ensured a source of tax from them" (Ibid. 270). Moreover, through these taxes, the commodity economy was forced upon the agrarian communities, which caused the collapse of the feudal system.

Lastly, we have commodity exchange (C). Like plunder and redistribution, commodity exchange exists between communities, but also within them (Karatani 2008, 579). Commodity exchange is the exchange between money and commodity; likewise it is also unreciprocal. Commodity exchange can be seen as unreciprocal because as Karatani explains, "...each individual worker is paid wages for their work, but not for their joint work or increased production by their 'collective power,' which goes to the capitalist" (2003, 167). Thus, insofar that the capitalist steals from the worker, commodity exchange is similar to plunder. However, unlike mode of exchange B

(plunder and redistribution), mode of exchange C can be considered free. Marx explains that the modern worker feels free because he or she do not have a means of production nor are they tied to their master or lord like the serfs and slaves were in the past (Ibid. 254). Furthermore, mode of exchange C is not reciprocal because the capitalist extracts surplus value during commodity exchange. The formula for commodity exchange is  $M-C-M'$  (Marx 1906, 173). The first M represents the money that the capitalist uses to purchase labor power and means of production to produce a commodity (C). The commodity is then sold in order to make more money (M'). This new money is once again invested into labor power and means of production to repeat the cycle. According to Wolff's essay on the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Marx explains surplus value as the profit that the capitalist generates by exploiting the labor power of the worker (2011). In other words the laborer gets paid less than the value of her labor power, which she exchanges for a wage. Surplus value is not only obtained from merchant capital but from industrial capital as well. This is evident when corporations extract cheap labor power from one country and sell the commodity produced by that cheap labor power in a separate value system. Karatani argues, "in order to deal with capitalist social formation [in addition to theorizing mode of exchange C, commodity exchange] we need to take into account modes A and B of exchange" (2008, 584).

Modes of exchange A, B and C remained disparate during feudalism (Karatani 2003, 277). For example, feudal states practiced plunder and redistribution (B) while agrarian communities practiced reciprocity and gift return (A). However, as cities began to grow between the communities, monetary exchange arose (C). Eventually the capitalist market economy pervaded, creating a new class of merchants, the bourgeoisie,

who joined together to oppose the absolute monarchical state and feudal lords. With the protection of the state, the bourgeoisie cultivated the national identity, which allowed for the creation of a unified market (278). Reciprocity and gift return (mode of exchange A) that used to be practiced within the agrarian communities was fictitiously recovered in the form of the nation.

The three modes of exchange came together forming the capitalist nation state. Karatani explains that the “three are at once contradictory and complementary to one another” (2008, 585). While the capitalist economy engenders inequality, the “state guarantees...the reproduction of labor power by redistribution” (Karatani 2003, 13). Moreover, when capital causes class disparities, the bourgeoisie depend on the state’s creation of a nation of ‘free and equal individuals’ to effectively make class relations invisible (152). Thus, it is evident that the three modes of exchange: nation, state, and capital work together to maintain our current social formation (Karatani 2008, 585).

Karatani depicts the marriage of nation, state and capital as forming a Borromean ring that makes it impossible to overthrow one on its own (2008, 585). Rather nation, state and capital must be transcended at the same time. The French Revolution, with the pillars liberty, equality and fraternity, was a crucible for forging links (Karatani 2003, 14). Allow me to quote Karatani on this point:

It was amid the bourgeois revolution that these three were *officially* married. As in the trinity intoned in the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity—capital, state, and nation copulated and amalgamated themselves into a force that was inseparable ever after. Hence the modern state must be called, *sensu stricto*, the capitalist nation-state. They were made to be mutually

complementary, reinforcing each other. When economic liberty becomes excessive and class conflict is sharpened, the state intervenes to redistribute wealth and regulate the economy, and at the same time, the emotion of national unity (mutual aid) fills up the cracks. When facing this fearless trinity, undermining one or the other does not work. (Karatani 2003, 278-9)

I draw this to our attention because it enables us to more fully understand how nation, state, and capital function in relation to one another. Fraternity represents the nation (A) by garnering the emotion of unity to reinforce the structure. Equality embodies the state (B) that exists in order to mitigate class struggle that is automatically engendered due to the “free” market. Lastly, liberty represents commodity exchange (C) insofar that it convinces us that we are free to choose where and when to buy and sell. This analysis allows us to comprehend the deep entrenchment of the capitalist nation state, as well as difficulties that are sure to ensue in the attempt to transcend it.

It is also crucial to note that capital only circulates properly and expands if and when the workers “buy back—in totality—what they produce” (Karatani 2003, 9). This allows the C to transform back into M', completing the cycle. Surplus value can only be extracted if the workers consume the sum of what they produced (20). It is essential to understand the position of a worker as both a seller of his or her labor power and as a buyer of commodities because, in essence, the worker has two moments to stop capital. The first opportunity Karatani notes is captured in Negri's demand, “Don't Work as a Wage Laborer” (Ibid. 25). The second opportunity is evident in Gandhi's rhetoric that says, “Don't Buy Capitalist Products!” In other words, if workers collectively decided to

both quit working and stop buying capitalist products—to cease producing and consuming—they would be able to bring an end to capital.

Yet, dialectically, with this opportunity comes a great, fundamental challenge. The difficulty in producing a movement that would confront capital occurs because the worker subject incurs a split in their role during the capitalist production of commodities (Karatani 2003, 20). The division occurs between the workers as sellers of their labor power and the workers as consumers of commodities. This split makes it seem “as if corporations and consumers were the only subjects of economic activities...[and] segregates the labor and consumers’ movements” (Karatani 20). Nevertheless, if workers want to challenge capital they must first recognize the role that they play as laborers as well as consumers. Implicitly, to confront capital, the labor and consumer movements must find a way to merge. However, it is evident that this unification has not occurred; while labor movements have declined, consumers’ movements (such as environmentalism) are thriving. Also labor movements oftentimes do not perceive their universality with other movements, rather they see their struggle as specific to their workplace. Comparably, consumers’ movements, that frequently manifest themselves in the form of civil acts, do not realize their connection with labor movements. To bring the labor and consumer movements together, it seems that labor movements would need to consciously understand their fight as a part of the same fight that the consumers’ movements are fighting and visa versa.

Karatani first examines producers’/consumers’ cooperatives, comparing them to stock companies where stockholders would need to be workers, as a potential means to confront the laborer consumer split (2003, 17). However, he notes that

producers'/consumers' cooperatives would not be able to contest the capitalist nation state. It appears that LETS (Local Exchange Trading System) provides a possible way to confront the split that occurs between the laborer and consumer. Karatani describes LETS as a "multifaceted system of settlement where participants have their own accounts, register the wealth and service that they can offer in the inventory, conduct exchanges freely, and then the results are recorded in their accounts" (Ibid. 23). In LETS the consumer cannot become completely disconnected from the laborer because he or she has contact with the laborer during when acquiring the good or service directly from other participants. Also, LETS is founded on the zero sum principle, which means that there is no interest and money ceases to exist. LETS can be considered a free "economic-ethical association" because individuals are not required to exchange with those who are mutually close and can change from one LETS to another whenever they choose (Ibid. 24). In other words, they are not bound to a particular community nor must they possess a particular state's currency in order to participate. Instead, LETS gives each individual the freedom to create their own currency (by registering what they plan to exchange into an account). Thus, by stimulating consumers-as-workers, LETS allows people to begin to have the opportunity to stop capital by not buying capitalist products and instead participating in a local alternative economy. LETS encourages non-capitalist cooperatives by supporting local economies instead of the capitalist economy (Ibid. 301).

Karatani is also careful to examine the challenges that would still be faced in creating a seemingly utopian society. He argues that the will to power and the variance in individual abilities would remain (Ibid. 182). He accepts Kant's ontological premise of human "social unsociability." Kant argues that humans by nature were asocial as well

as social; thus he contends that they would be inclined to come together to make a society governed by rules and yet would cause a constant refusal to accept the same society (Karatani 592). Kant imagined that only through this “social unsociability” and war would a world republic eventually be formed (Ibid. 593). Additionally, a representative and bureaucratic system would be required. Karatani argues that the universal suffrage through the secret ballot engenders the concentration of power into the hands of few, which he calls (following Marx) dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (2003, 183). So Karatani argues that a lottery system be introduced, which would not allow power to be fixated as readily. A mix of universal suffrage through the secret ballot and the lottery system would allow the representative body to be trusted by the people and not allow power to be concentrated. When considering capital an ethical dilemma ensues because this social formation depends upon exploiting people so that the capitalist can generate a surplus value.

2.

Hence, Karatani examines Kant’s moral imperative. Kant’s moral imperative requires a freeness that comes from treating others as free agents (Karatani 2003, vii). Treating others as free agents requires us to treat each other as ends, not means. Karatani explains, “the moral domain comes into existence only after the imperative ‘be free’” is commanded by the other (Ibid. 124). The other can come from an outside community that does not share a common set of rules (125). Yet this morality will never be achieved so as long as we live in a society dominated by commodity exchange (viii). Karatani explains Kant’s kingdom of ends:



[For Kant] becoming moral was less a question of good and evil than of being *causa sui* and hence *free*, and this compels us to treat other people as free agents. The ultimate message of Kantian moral law lies in the imperative: ‘Act so that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in any other person, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means...’ It might be that, in the concrete, his goal was to establish an association of small producers in opposition to the civil society dominated by merchant capitalism... In the context of a capitalist economy where people treat each other merely as a means to an end, the Kantian ‘kingdom of freedom’ or ‘kingdom of ends’ clearly comes to entail another new meaning, that is, communism. (Karatani vii, viii; compare Karatani and Wainwright 2012, 34).

I draw this to our attention because capital extracts as much surplus value as possible from the worker to make a profit and be able to reinvest the new money to continue the accumulation of money. Thus, in the capitalist system, people are used as means to an end, not as an end-in-itself. Kant went beyond this spatial definition to also include the temporal other, which includes generations—past and future—not currently in existence. This is to say that we have a moral imperative to consider what type of world we inherited from our ancestors and what type of world we would like to leave to future generations.

This same relentless accumulation of capital is of much concern to the environment. Arguably the most pressing problem that we face today is climate change, a product of the capitalist mode of production that requires relentless accumulation. Through capitalist means of production, money is constantly reinvested in labor power

and means of production to produce commodities that are then sold to accumulate wealth; during this process greenhouse gases are continuously released into the atmosphere leading to climate change (Magdoff and Foster 2012, 13). If we continue to alter the world's climate it will most likely have ramifications affecting all species, humans included. Herein lies the importance of thinking of future generations: will our children and other species not yet born be able to survive in this new altered environment that we are creating? Capital achieves its essential accumulation through always looking for the most efficient way to produce a commodity (i.e. new technologies and cheapest labor) (Ibid. 39).<sup>1</sup>

To transcend this cycle, Kant's objective was to create an association of small producers to challenge capital (Ibid. vii). Similarly, Karatani argues that there is a fourth mode of exchange (D) that should follow the capitalist market economy, which he calls association (13). Marx conceptualizes association as producers'/consumers' cooperatives and argues that they will never be able to survive in competition with capital (17). Marx's communism can be considered an "ethical intervention" (130). Karatani argues that we must examine Kant through Marx and Marx through Kant because "[t]o adapt Kant's rhetoric, communism without an economic basis is empty, while communism without a moral base is blind" (130). Thus, association (mode of exchange D) can be conceptualized as an ethico-economic form of exchange that would take the place of modes of exchange B and C, namely the state and capital (167). Karatani further

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<sup>1</sup> The "communism" that Karatani is referring to at the end of this quote is not historical communism (i.e. the Soviet Union, Cuba, etc.). Rather we can imagine communism, as Marx did, as a regulative idea, "to which reality (will) have to adjust itself" instead of a constructive idea (Karatani 2003, xi).

conceptualizes that associationism would only be able to function if a global association of associations of free and equal producers emerged to replace capital (166).

Karatani warns us of the danger of attempting to turn mode of exchange D into a constructive idea, exemplified by scientific socialism in the case of Stalinism (Karatani and Wainwright 2012, 40). The difficulty in transcending the capitalist nation state occurs because the three modes of exchange come together forming a Borromean ring in which each element is contradictory and at the same time complementary to one another (Karatani 2008, 585). Karatani illuminates this idea explaining, “when the capitalist economy leads to class disparity and struggle...the nation demands equality and the state alleviates class opposition by means of taxation and redistribution” (585). Ergo, if the state or nation is used in the hopes of obliterating capital, capital will not disappear; instead the nation-state will only be reinforced. Neither can the intensification of globalization cause the dissolving of nation and state (Karatani 2003, 281). The world market threatens individual nations’ economies, which causes the strengthening of separate states, each attempting to protect their nation. A movement towards a free and reciprocal society would require the transcendence of all three elements of the Borromean ring—nation, state, and capital—all at once. However, these same three components constitute our very existence and thus make it difficult to imagine organized society without them.

3.

Karatani argues that mode of exchange D has never been realized as a historical social formation. Following Karatani, Wainwright suggests that universal religion

exemplifies an attempt to create a free and reciprocal society (lecture 3 Nov. 2010). He further describes that the emergence of monotheism was an attempt to initiate Karatani's mode of exchange D. For example, Christ says that we should treat everyone freely and reciprocally as brothers and sisters. However, as Wainwright makes evident, the attempt by religions to achieve Karatani's mode of exchange D has always slipped back to mode of exchange A, that which is reciprocal but not free. This regression occurs because religions inherently distinguish themselves from other religions. Marx, too, saw the challenges in creating association as a mode of exchange. Marx further explains that to realize mode of exchange D, one would need to change the social production into one major system of free and cooperative labor (Karatani 2003, 175). However, this would require "general social changes... *changes of the general conditions of society*, never to be realized, save by the transfer of the organized forces of society, viz., the state power, from capitalists and landlords to the producers themselves" (Karatani 176). In effect, he claims that nation, capital, and state are so entrenched that they attack our capacity for organization and creativity, which makes it difficult to form free producers'/consumers' cooperatives. Indeed, Karatani claims that so long as we live within the confines of the current society, cooperatives cannot become dominant because they collapse under the competition with capital (Ibid. 17).

A regulative idea, as defined by Kant, is "an ideal which constantly offers the ground to criticize reality" (Karatani 217). Karatani considers mode of exchange D, association, a regulative idea. Borrowing from Kant, Karatani defines a regulative idea as the premise that nature be explained (51). Dorothy Emmet further explains that although regulative ideals are not realizable, they establish orientation for a practice

(1994, 2). Regulative ideas allow us to work towards a goal even though it cannot be achieved; they give us direction. Unlike constitutive concepts, regulative ideals “are concepts of what would be the final state of a practice according to some absolute standard” (6). They do not need to be considered as if they already occur or even will exist. Karatani explains that theoretical judgments are supported by beliefs (2003, 51). For example, mathematics and natural science only prevailed due to the theoretical faith that nature be explained (52). Emmet explains, “the Regulative Ideal of scientific enquiry is an ideal guiding science as a *practice*...” (1994, 17). Similarly Kant argues that “all theories, if they are to be synthetic and expansive, cannot do away with a certain faith” (Karatani 2003, 52). Ergo, nourishing association as a regulative idea is essential because one must have a theoretical faith to imagine the possibility for transcending the capitalist nation state. Kant believed that the heart of morality would only be found once we have followed the imperative to “act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only” (Kant 2008, 46). Kant envisioned a kingdom where we treat one another as ends rather than means to an end as a regulative idea. The kingdom of ends is a critique of capitalism because during commodity exchange, it is impossible to treat other human beings as ends. Ever since life has been composed of the division of labor, people are treated as mere means. Therefore, to realize Kant’s kingdom of ends, the current capitalist nation state must be transcended.

While the capitalist nation state may appear to be an inescapable limitation, not imagining another possibility of a different social organization is yet another limitation that we place on ourselves. To not imagine a different social organization would mean

that we are content with living in our current social formation that is unjust. The stakes are high; there are socio-environmental limits. Moreover, how much longer do we want to continue treating other people, as well as the environment, as mere means to an end? In an interview with Karatani, Wainwright elucidates this point explaining that mode of exchange “D will persist... ‘so long as there is a drive, or will, to transcend the capital-nation-state’” (2012, 39). By embracing Karatani’s mode of exchange D as a regulative idea, we refuse to settle into a flawed social formation.

These theoretical ideas, I argue, may be clarified by examining them in light of a real, existing social struggle in capitalist modernity. I further contend that the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico have embraced Karatani’s mode of exchange D as a regulative idea, thereby fostering the faith necessary to transcend the capitalist nation state.

## CHAPTER 2

1.

On January 1, 1994 the *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) invaded San Cristóbal and three other towns in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico (Womack 1999, 42) and on this day the Zapatistas released a statement declaring “basta,” or enough (Collier 2005, 2). Addressing all people of Mexico, they described their frustrations:

500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to promulgate [their] constitution and expel the French empire from [their] soil, and later [when] the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz denied [them] the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled... We have been denied the most elemental education so that others can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food, and no education. Nor are we able freely and democratically to elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children.

(Ibid. 2)

The Zapatista uprising coincided with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Womack 1999, 42). The disregard for the people of Chiapas symbolized by the signing of the NAFTA agreement was, in the eyes of the Zapatistas, only one more example of the numerous preceding cases where the people of Chiapas were ignored in terms of political and economic decisions. NAFTA serves the

interests of national and international capital to continue the plunder of natural resources and the exploitation of human beings, which would sustain and further aggravate poverty in the region (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 67-8). Ergo, the EZLN called on all of the people of Mexico to join them in their fight for work, land, shelter, food, healthcare, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace (Díaz 1995, 21).

The Mexican state of Chiapas has been poverty-stricken and divided since the Spanish colonial era. Although Spanish records frequently commemorate the conquistadors as heroes, the indigenous people document the colonization as the start of a prolonged duration of “forced labor, disease, hunger, and cultural weakening” (Gilbert & Henderson 2002, 95). The indigenous Maya people of Chiapas were obligated to pay taxes to the state and forced to serve as the laborers for the ladino elites (Womack 1999, 6). Conditions were so harsh that more than 75 percent of the pre-conquest population died during the first decades of the Spanish invasion (Díaz 1995, 35). During the 19th century legislation was passed requiring the indigenous to split up their land into individual and privately owned plots, the majority of which were taken by the ladinos (Womack 1999, 6). Those without land were no longer able to support themselves and became heavily indebted. Mexico’s industrial revolution unevenly favored northern states while causing misery in south pacific states such as Chiapas (Ibid. 11; see also Díaz 1995, 34).<sup>2</sup> The masters of the land owned everything that the indigenous peons possessed (lands, house, and the fruits of their labor) and thus were able to exploit them

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<sup>2</sup> Díaz notes that the living standard in Chiapas is low but the living standard of the *mestizos* in Chiapas is still much greater compared to the living standard of the indigenous in the same region due to the monopoly that the *mestizos* had over the land which allowed them to exploit the indigenous in their drive to accumulate capital (34).



(Díaz 39).<sup>3</sup>

At its onset, the capitalist nation state has depended upon colonialism and slavery to maintain itself. In the case of Mexico, Spain exploited its cheap labor power and natural resources (Hesketh 2010, 385). Over time, the new Spanish regimen converted the indigenous' communal nucleus into a mere social space; their socioeconomic, cultural, political and territorial freedoms were taken (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 20). Moreover the communal organization suffered during the colonial period because Spain and 'peninsulares' in Mexico continually plundered their resources (both land and labor). Gilly explains "(i)n order to clear a path for itself, capitalism needed to liquidate the communal lands..." (Gilly 2006, 5).<sup>4</sup> For example, haciendas took the place of communal indigenous villages because the haciendas allowed Europe to extract resources from Mexico more systematically. Saldaña-Portillo further explains that the original indigenous communities were also split up so that colonizers could be assigned townships; the indigenous peoples were then forced to work on haciendas and in mines located in these townships (2006, 33). Furthermore, imperial Spain demanded that the indigenous pay tribute for the "guardianship" that they were provided. Coatsworth emphasizes that Spanish colonial rule was expensive, costing an estimated 17 million pesos per year (1978, 85) and, as is evidenced above, the indigenous communities endure much of this colonial burden.

Mexico's independence of 1810 failed to end the injustice. Despite its independence, land was not redistributed meaning that haciendas remained dominate

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<sup>3</sup> Díaz describes the relationship between the masters and the peons as one in which the peons accepted the supremacy of the masters due to fear and subservience. Here we see coercion and hegemony complementing one another so that the masters could maintain their power over the peons.

<sup>4</sup> The haciendas that were established under the Porfirian dictatorship and the continued forced Indian labor created surplus value that capitalism needed to survive (Gilly 2006, 14).

(Ibid. 86). Coatsworth explains that large “[e]state agriculture enjoyed advantages not available to Indian villagers, small landowners, or tenant farmers: economies of scale, access to outside credit, information about new technologies and distant markets, a measure of protection from predadotry officials, and greater security of tenure” (87). The Mexican state seized Maya land and then forced the Maya to work the land to enhance capitalist production (Gilly 1997, 7). Mexico also faced U.S. imperial aggression. In 1847 over 43,000-armed Americans were fighting in Mexican territory (compared to less than 9,000 Mexican soldiers) (Rives 592-3). The following year the United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo; the U.S. acquired approximately 500,000 square miles of Mexico’s territory (Bratzel 2001, 51). Later Benito Juárez assumed the presidency. Although some argue that liberals serving Mexico from 1855-1876 (i.e. Juárez) were men of the people yet “[d]ocuments from the countryside make it clear that Mexican villagers, especially Indian peasants, found the liberal program harmful and offensive, and that they resisted it...” (Powell 1974, 714). Next, during the years of Poririo Díaz’s rule (1876-1911), acts were legislated that allowed “surveying companies” and foreign settlers to work on the peasants’ land, which further threatened its communal properties (Gilly 1997, 4).<sup>5</sup> However, many of the peasants that faced these challenges maintained the ideology of solidarity inherent in their communal organization (Gilly 2006, 28).<sup>6</sup> The European’s reorganization of Mexican society to serve its own purposes engendered poverty, provoking the revolution in 1910.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This demonstrates Karatani’s analysis of the formation of a Borromean ring. In the aforementioned example capital directly depends on the violence of the state to function; the state’s brutality is legitimized by the nation.

<sup>6</sup> Kuwabara explains that solidarity comes from the garnering of a mutual trust and cohesion in the community “to maintain mutually beneficial exchange...”(561). This can be compared to Karatani’s

Emiliano Zapata challenged Madero's administration, demanding the restoration of ejidos that were stolen and transformed into haciendas under the rule of Díaz (Phipps 1924, 8). Zapata's ideals spread from Morelos, where he was governor, across much of Mexico.<sup>8</sup> The pressure of the demands for the restoration of ejidos led to the eventual addition of article 27 to the Constitution of 1917 that stated, "municipalities and settlements having communal character...regained their legal capacity to own real property" (Ibid. 13). The Mexican revolution did not start by employing a specific theory, instead it had a particular agenda, namely: the restoration of communal lands (Gilly 2006, 62-3; see also Nuijten 2003, 477). The peasants directly achieved their goals by taking over haciendas by force and then directly harvesting their newly restored lands in Morelos, Oaxaca, Guerrero and other parts of the South (Gilly 2006, 68).<sup>9</sup> Phipps compares the Mexican Revolution to the French Revolution, arguing that both revolutions led to a rapid reconstruction (1924, 13). Phipps further explains that the Mexican Revolution allowed Mexico to start fresh with the "redemption of a race" (18).

However, Phipps' analysis of the Mexican Revolution falls short. Hesketh further examines the Mexican Revolution, making reference to Gramsci's concept called "passive revolution" (2010, 388). He explains that any revolution forces of change are automatically confronted with conservative forces. Gramsci argues that revolution and

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discussion of nation, where the exchange within a community is reciprocal but not free because the receiver of a gift will always feel compelled to give a gift back in return for what he or she was given (2003, 202).

<sup>7</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, the U.S. has taken on much of Europe's role as the hegemon and continues to sculpt Mexico for its benefits (Ciccantell 58)

<sup>8</sup> Zapatism also sought the transcendence of the state through international support, which is evident in a letter from Zapata where he connects the Mexican and the Russian Revolutions and imagines an alliance between workers and peasants (*The Mexican Revolution* 278). Zapata's ideals parallel with Karatani's argument of the necessity of the merging of the labor and consumer movements.

<sup>9</sup> Yet there is major difference between the strategies of the Zapatists of the Mexican revolution and the Zapatistas of the current movement. After seizing power at the local level, the rural Zapatists wanted to go on to achieve national power. The Zapatistas do not have this same aspiration of gaining national power through the control of the state.

restoration are dialectical, calling the Mexican Revolution a passive revolution because although it seemingly successfully reorganized social relations (revolution), “popular initiatives [were] neutralized to continue class domination (restoration)” (Ibid. 388). In his prison notebooks (SPN, 106,7 (Q15§17)), Gramsci attains his definition of passive revolution by the examination of political science as employing the following two principles: “1. That no social formation disappears as long as the productive forces which have developed within it still find room for further forward movement; 2. That a society does not set itself tasks for whose solution the necessary conditions have not already been incubated, etc.” (Forgacs 2000, 263). Ergo, with the use of Gramsci’s theoretical framework, it is evident that the Mexican Revolution failed to break radically with the past because productive forces responsible for the capitalist nation state formation remained intact and in fact were employed to resolve class conflict. He further argues that the essential challenge that Mexico (or any capitalist nation state for that matter) confronts is the inability to establish the goal of creating a starkly different society.<sup>10</sup> In Hesketh’s words:

If one thing is clear, it is that the revolution did indeed precipitate the destruction of the old oligarchic state. However it is vital to analyse what forms of exploitation remained, where political power was concentrated and where the impetus for the nation’s development came from. When any social is challenged, forces of change and conservatism are naturally pitted against one another...[and thus] ultimately, popular initiatives are neutralised so as to continue class domination (restoration). The assassination of Emiliano Zapata in 1919, the

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<sup>10</sup> Thus, Zapatismo’s ability to imagine the groundwork for a different society is essential to the eventual creation of a social formation that lies outside of the capitalist nation state.

refocusing of an accumulation strategy based on industrialisation and the commercialisation of agriculture, and the concomitant incorporation of a limited amount of peasant worker demands into the constitution of 1917, coupled most importantly with large-scale agrarian reform, give concrete historical witness to these claims (2010, 388).

In this quote Hesketh contends that although large-scale agrarian reform was achieved during the Mexican Revolution, it could be considered a passive revolution (a revolution without a revolution in Gramsci's sense) (388). Gilly further argues that the 1910 revolution was just a battle for power between the local and central factions of the dominant elite and that the rural peasants of Chiapas were still excluded after the so-called revolution (1997, 52). The Mexican Revolution fell into passivity because popular dynamism was destroyed and instead the state was embraced to resolve class conflict (Hesketh 2010, 389). Here we see the welcoming of the state as a solution to class conflict leading not only to the strengthening of the state itself but to the fortification of capital and nation as well. Seeing the challenges inherent in the Mexican Revolution that rendered it a "passive revolution," allows us to recognize some of the challenges that the indigenous peoples continue to face.

According to Díaz-Polanco, the forces that the indigenous communities face today are far stronger than they were in the past (1997, 26). Neoliberal reconstruction started in the 1970s and was further consolidated by President Salinas with constitutional reforms in 1992 that would serve to further project Mexico into the emerging global order (Baronnet 2011, 145). Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution and the Agrarian Law were drastically changed under the Salinas administration (Nuijten 2003, 478). These

transformations permitted ejido holders to sell, buy, rent, or lease their land and allowed the ejido communities to form partnerships with private or individual investors (479). The constitutional reforms included the opening of once nationalized industries to foreign investment and the end of protections on agricultural products (Baronnet 2011, 145). The numerous privatizations “impoverished 37 million Mexicans, with an overrepresentation of them being from indigenous communities” according to the National Statistical Institute of the Government (Muñoz 2006, 263). The IMF and World Bank also coerced the Salinas administration to conform to “economic preparations” before receiving loans that would supposedly rescue them from the effects of the 1982 global debt crisis (262). Globalization functions under the neoliberal paradigm where the state functions as the regulator of capitalist accumulation (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 28). Rather than provide a solution to this misery, NAFTA threatened to intensify the poverty by claiming to end all price supports for corn and beans in 15 years (Womack 1999, 22).

## 2.

The rebellion occurred in Chiapas because the indigenous people were retaliating against a capitalist nation state that is set against them. The indigenous people have been fighting for over 500 years of colonialism (Mignolo 1997, 2). Díaz highlights the ongoing war in the following terms:

Los indígenas de la región habían perdido sus tierras a lo largo de la Colonia. Al principio la perdieron con la fuerza de las armas en beneficio de los blancos...

Más tarde las volvieron a perder ante la codicia de los dominicos que los convirtieron a todos en los tributarios del Señor. Los pocos que las conservaron,

reconocidos como pueblos, fueron con los años afectados por las leyes de desamortización que proclamaron los liberales en tiempos de Benito Juárez. Sus tierras, puestas a la venta junto con las de los dominicos, las compraron los finqueros del estado, aunque muchos, claro ni siquiera las tuvieron que comprar: simplemente las robaron. (Díaz 1995, 41-2)

Since its inception during the 16th century, the capitalist nation state has required plunder to extract (surplus) value. The indigenous communities were subjected to primitive accumulation. As Díaz points out in this quote, even during regimens that were supposedly liberal, such as the Juárez presidency, the state seized the lands of the indigenous people for the continued exploitation of land and labor.

Due to their despondent conditions, many families such as those whom worked as peons in El Porvenir started to flee to the Lacandon Jungle in 1960 to establish their own ejido, called La Sultana (Ibid. 51).<sup>11</sup> After some time the peasants from many other states also emigrated to the Jungle (47).<sup>12</sup> Throughout the 1970s and 1980s independent peasant organizations grew and strengthened to fight for land and the allowance of ejidal organizations as fundamental rights (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 67-8).

The church was arguably one of the most important organizers in the communities that began to populate the Lacandon Jungle (Díaz 1995, 55). Before the Zapatista uprising, the catholic church of Chiapas committed itself to liberation theology, which meant that the church was dedicated to stand by the poor, living in destitute situations (Binford et al. 2001, 83). Followers of the liberation theology called the social

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<sup>11</sup> The Lacandon Jungle quickly became very diverse because Tzeltals from Ocosingo were joined by Choles from the North, Tzotziles from the Highlands, Tojolabales and Zoques from the plains of the Central Valleys (Díaz 1995, 45)

<sup>12</sup> The Lacandon Jungle began to resemble a promised land. Yet this is ironic because according to Díaz this so called promised land was perhaps one of the most inhospitable in the world (1995, 47).

arrangements that manifested themselves through human exploitation and deprived human beings of their rights “sinful structures” (Díaz-Polanco 1980, 286-290). By the end of the 1960s, more than 300 catechists, well respected in their communities, were founded in the parish of Ocosingo (Díaz 1995, 56). Bishop Samuel Ruiz participated in the organization of a group of priests that would eventually break away from the traditional catholic doctrine to embrace the liberation theology (Díaz 1995, 58; see also Speed and Reyes 2005, 51).<sup>13</sup> Ruiz supported the organization of the First Indigenous Congress of Chiapas in which four topics were discussed: land, healthcare, education, and commerce (Díaz 1995, 67). The long-term goal of the Congress was to create a society not dependent on private property for the means of production.<sup>14</sup> The Congress served as a space in which a network of indigenous representatives could discuss their discontent with their conditions and plan ways in which to mobilize (Martinez-Torres 2006, 61).<sup>15</sup> The Congress called on catechists to form Quiptic Ta Lecubtesel, an organization formed to represent the interests of the indigenous communities (Díaz 1995, 70, 73). Additionally, the diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas supported the activists of the Union del Pueblo, another organization that accepted the use of violence in the fight for a changed Mexico.<sup>16</sup> In 1976 Ruiz sent 34 church catechists to serve in Las Cañadas. In the 1980s, those who would eventually form the nucleus of the EZLN had relations with the diocese of San Cristobal (91). The church supported the ideals of the

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<sup>13</sup> Additionally, starting in the 1980s, the Catholic Church laid the foundation for various human rights organizations such as Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center (Speed and Reyes 2005, 52).

<sup>14</sup> Díaz notes that these goals were common in the 1970s when the world still dreamed of Revolution (1995, 67). However, Karatani notes that since the fall of the U.S.S.R., movements opposing capital have been only minor and decentralized (2003, 304).

<sup>15</sup> The First Indigenous Congress of Chiapas provided a space to organize that eventually resulted in the public Zapatista uprising of 1994 (Martinez-Torres 2006, 61)

<sup>16</sup> However, Bishop Ruiz and the majority of his collaborators claimed that they opposed any form of violence in the rebellion (Binford et al. 2001, 78).



Unión del Pueblo and the Linea Proletaria in their striving towards a revolution because it was committed to the liberation of the indigenous communities in Las Cañadas (93). In 1985 the Mexican state was found responsible for the killings of 153 people, among them a manager of PSUM, a peasant leader of ejido Buena Vista, the secretary general of CIOAC, and a lawyer of the poor leaders of peasant organizations and ejidos (102). In reaction to the state's attack 105 guerrilla rebels penetrated the communities.<sup>17</sup> The clergy began their politicization with their participation in the Indigenous Congress of Chiapas and continued their politicization when Bishop Ruiz invited the Linea Proletaria, a student group that wanted to mobilize the masses to demolish the bourgeois and their government, to have a meeting in San Cristobal (Díaz 1995, 74; see also Binford et al. 2001, 77). After the Zapatista rebellion Ruíz admitted his involvement stating, "ciertamente nosotros tenemos que ver con esa rebelión... porque a raíz de la reflexión cristiana instamos en los indios a recuperar su dignidad y darse cuenta de que para ellos no sólo hay deberes sino también derechos" (Díaz 1995, 93). Bishop Ruíz acknowledges that the Christian reflection and the commitment of the church urged the communities of Las Cañadas to politicize themselves and recuperate their dignity. In fact many of the ambitions of the Zapatistas could be found in the Diocesan Plan of 1986 that identified three enemies: the federal government, the Chiapan oligarchy, and the imperialist tendencies of North America (106). On January 2, 1994, a day after the EZLN uprising, the three Chiapan bishops (from San Cristóbal, Tuxtla and Tapachula) published a joint press release explaining their commitment to the Zapatistas (Binford et al. 2001, 82). In the statement, they explained that they would be willing to mediate between the

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<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that the guerrillas were backed by the church, and according to Díaz, without this support the guerrilla action would have been unthinkable (1995, 103).

government and the EZLN and recognized the Zapatista's rights to a true dialogue of mutual respect (83). President Salinas and the EZLN specifically solicited Bishop Ruiz to head the National Commission of Intermediation (CONAI) as a space for dialogue shortly after the 1994 Zapatista uprising (68).

The state saw these organizations as a threat and thus abandoned its past policies of assimilation to try a new approach (Muñoz 2006, 231). In the mid 1970s, the state tried to organize the indigenous communities into associations of separate ethnicities in the hopes that they would not be able to organize. Díaz-Polanco calls the state's strategy "ethnographic indigenism," i.e. the state attempts to create laws that recognize Mexico as a multicultural society (1997, 18). Paradoxically, the Mexican national project tries to assimilate and absorb the indigenous into Mexican citizens through public education, state protection and economic development (Gilly 1997, 45). Héctor Díaz-Polanco describes Latin America as a region that is home to multiple ethnicities but the nation state is organized as if there were only one (1997, 15). Arias et al advance this argument explaining:

[p]ensar al México de hoy como una nación multicultural es todavía un anhelo. Si bien nuestro país se reconoce como una nación pluricultura, sustentada originalmente en sus pueblos indígenas aún falta mucho para que se promuevan y aceptan cabalmente, como parte de su condición e identidad, las diferencias todas las culturas indígenas y no indígenas que conviven en su territorio y que luchan por ser diferente en un marco de respeto y de unidad nacional. (Arias 2008, 112)

Arias et al thus question Mexico's claim to be a multicultural nation. Mexico will only be recognized as a pluriethnic country once it accepts and embraces the original

indigenous communities that are a part of its condition and identity. Thus far the Mexican state has failed to embrace the numerous indigenous people that make up its citizenry. For example, the Mexican state does not embrace the more than 60 indigenous languages that its citizens speak. Instead through state programs, such as education, the state forces Spanish as the dominant language. The Mexican state also fails to recognize that many of its nationals have experienced pasts that are very distinct from one another. Five centuries of oppression and various modes of survival have given particular visions and distinct versions of a history that cannot be treated as homogenous. Gilly explains “(p)ara ser mexicanos...los indígenas tenían que renunciar a su propia identidad. En otras palabras, el Estado liberal no sólo expropiaba las tierras de las comunidades, sino también, y por necesidad, su mundo, su imaginario y su pasado” (1997, 44). Gilly draws our attention to the state’s violence towards the indigenous people that went far beyond the seizure of their lands. A type of cultural dispossession takes place when the unique histories of the indigenous people are seized by the state and transformed into a common past, belonging to all Mexicans, to justify the fight for independence and later the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

Autonomy is an open and democratic model that is not exclusive or intolerant, where multiple lifestyles and cultures coexist and respect one another (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 34). The embrace of multiculturalism requires a multinational state instead of a state that attempts to homogenize diverse cultures into one that dominates. A multinational state would be required to accept that its citizens have lived disparate pasts. In the recognition of separate histories, autonomy will be understood as a right of the indigenous communities to practice the self-government that they enjoyed in the past

(Arias 2008, 134). The fight for autonomy is central to the Zapatista's demand for inclusion. That is to say that the Zapatistas do not want to break away from Mexico; rather they want to be embraced as Mexican citizens of a particular type (Wilkerson & Paris 2001, 106). Yet how does Zapatismo fight to be included in the universal modern state called Mexico while at the same time battling to protect their particularities? Zapatismo hopes to defy neoliberalism's homogenizing force that only allows space for one dominant rationale by turning fragmentation into a universal project (Mignolo 1997, 3). This is to say that Zapatismo does not hope to universalize itself through a normalizing force because it realizes that each local history of colonialism is unique. In doing so, distinct peripheries, each with their own history, begin to challenge the homogenizing rationale of the global economy (Ibid. 7).

However, their demand for inclusion is different than the sort of inclusion that the Mexican state attempted to force upon them, where the indigenous Maya would be inserted after their communities were subordinated to the tutelage of the Mexican state (Gilly 1997, 52). Upon the completion of this insertion process, the indigenous people would be dependent on the Mexican state. After Mexico's independence, until the mid 1970s, the official politics of the state has been to assimilate the indigenous communities into the mestizo culture (Mattiace et al. 2002, 230). In doing so, however, the state further undermined the indigenous communities by recognizing their existence yet refusing to re-organize itself to allow for the transfer of power to these communities. Moreover, the state values individualism through reforms that benefit the free market (i.e. privatizations). The state rewards individualism, which modifies the logic of communities while simultaneously supporting the free market that exploits their

resources (31). The state set out to destroy villages that were founded on communal lands because these villages directly countered the capitalist system in their lack of reliance on wage based relations (Gilly 2006, 41). The neoliberal model reflects the most recent battle in a long war that has been waged on indigenous communities; however, this war has been ongoing ever since the Spanish invasion when the Spaniards obligated the Indians to sell their resources for a low price and then provide a market to buy back expensive Spanish products (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 39). Allow me to quote Gilly:

About 90 percent of the pre-conquest population was annihilated as a result of overwork, disease, malnutrition, and systematic destruction of the equilibrium underlying its old conditions of existence, reproduction, and interchange with nature. Its bones, muscles, nerves, brainmatter, and life were almost literally transmitted into the mass of precious metal, which passing through Spain, enormously accelerated the initial impetus with which European capitalism was entering the world. (2006, 14)

Here Gilly sheds light upon the exploitation of labor power and plunder of natural resources that capitalist state requires to obtain a surplus value that it requires to perpetuate itself.

This long war has caused much poverty in indigenous regions. In Chiapas in the indigenous municipalities 52% of the population is illiterate (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 81; see also Díaz 1995, 107). Indigenous communities are more likely to live in worse conditions (i.e. crowding and houses lacking roofs, electricity, drainage, tubed water, etc.) (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 83; see also Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 314). Díaz describes, “[l]os ejidos vivían muy olvidados en la Selva. El 99 por ciento no tenía luz, agua,

correo, teléfono. El 90 por ciento no tenía caminos para transitar. El 85 por ciento no tenía maestros del Sistema de Educación Federal” (1995, 103).<sup>18</sup> The life expectancy in Chiapas preceding the 1994 Zapatista uprising was a mere 68.5 years, the lowest in Mexico (Binford et al. 2001, 74). The infant mortality rate in Chiapas is also among the highest in Mexico. In 1993, before the Zapatista uprising, the rural sector (most to half of the population of Chiapas) only contributed to 18% of the total state GDP and received a pittance of a salary.<sup>19</sup> According to INEGI (National Institute of Statistics and Geography), in the early 1990s 19.1 % of the Chiapanecos working in the state did not receive any income and 39.9 % received less than minimum wage (Díaz 1995, 139). These rural populations have faced out-migration, which threatens to weaken their movement (Baronnet et al. 2011, 448). This migration to urban areas of Mexico or the United States began to accelerate during the impasse of negotiations between the Zapatistas and the Mexican state. Out-migration persists as the Mexican government continues to wage, what the Zapatistas call, a low-intensity war against them (450). The governmental strategy in the region includes the increased militarization of Zapatista territories and the attempt to co-opt and divide Zapatista bases by offering resources to those who will agree to withdraw from the movement (Baronnet et al. 2011, 450; see also Ross 2006, 236).

The Mexican state’s response to poverty in the region was the starting of the National Program of Solidarity (PRONASOL), an initiative under President Salinas, which in practice became a source of resources for the state itself (Díaz-Polanco 1997,

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<sup>18</sup> These very circumstances help explain how the Catholic Church was able to insert itself and develop a paternal relationship with many communities of Las Cañadas; in the case of some communities, their only relation with the outside world was through the church (Díaz 103).

<sup>19</sup> This is a paradox considering that this region is rich in hydraulic resources, oil, minerals, precious wood, and biodiversity (Binford et al. 2001, 75).

104). By installing PRONASOL, the Mexican state sought to displace and divide the traditional indigenous organizations while co-opting the indigenous people into becoming their own political clientele (156). Yet, PRONASOL did not benefit the poorest sectors of the society; rather benefited the administrative center more (159). PRONASOL was accompanied by PROCAMPO in 1993 that functioned by payments of compensation, oftentimes in the hopes of winning popular governmental support, that oftentimes further impoverished areas and did not improve living standards (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 131). Salinas altered the Agrarian Law to allow for the privatization of ejidos and accompanied this new law with PROCEDE to map, measure and register plots of land (Nuijten 2003, 475). Once the individual plots of land were registered and the ejidatarios received their title under PROCEDE, they would be able to fundamentally change the idea of the communal ejido into a private piece of land (479). Fox also signed the Acuerdo Nacional para el Campo in 2003, which served the interest of the United States by allowing it to further its policy of agricultural protection so that it could maintain its position as the main exporter of yellow corn, while forcing Mexico to remain one of the top importers of corn (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 131).<sup>20</sup> Another governmental program, known as OPORTUNIDADES, was put into place claiming it would improve the conditions of families that live in extreme poverty by allotting these families monetary funds for education, health, and food while requiring these families to register themselves in the closest health clinic and go to periodic appointments for preventative care (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 435). However, programs like OPORTUNIDADES continue to perpetuate the neoliberal framework where health is a service instead of a right and patients become

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<sup>20</sup> Thus it is evident that in reality, colonialism is not abolished. The U.S. has, in several cases, replaced Europe as the imperial power. The passing of NAFTA forces Mexico to remain economically dependent on the U.S.

paying consumers (436).

As the state establishes these aforementioned programs that oftentimes attempt to force the citizens under the tutelage of the Mexican state, it simultaneously advances the myth of modernity. The myth of modernity, as explained by philosopher Enrique Dussel, is to say that “[o]ne defines one’s own culture as superior and more developed and the other as inferior, crude, barbaric, and culpably *immature*” (1995, 64). Through this myth Europe was able to self-justify the colonization of the Americas, since violence was necessary to “emancipate,” “civilize” and “develop” the “Other”.<sup>21</sup> In Chiapas today, neoliberalism depends upon a fictitious story that it created to legitimize itself where it portrays the origins of society as backward indigenous (Wilkerson & Paris 2001, 106). Saldaña-Portillo explains that since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, “liberal government[s] in independent Mexico had identified Indians, with their communally organized townships and landholdings, as the main obstacle to building a modern nation based on the private ownership of land” (2006, 36). By creating this myth, the nation-state assists capital in its exclusive, destructive race into the future while blaming the indigenous for their lack of success in solidifying one national culture. In fact during this time, the indigenous continued to symbolize a lack of modernity and the unfinished national project.

The World Bank demonstrates this faith in progress today. When asked to review the situation of poverty in Mexico, the World Bank concluded that extreme poverty and conditions of underdevelopment were the products of the inadequate use of existing resources and the absence of support or a first push that would spur dynamic development (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 107). Dussel argues that “[m]odernity as myth always

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<sup>21</sup> Similarly Karatani theorizes that the capitalist economy finds its roots in the faith in progress (2003, 11).



authorizes its violence as civilizing whether it propagates Christianity in the sixteenth century or...the free market in the twentieth” (1995, 71). The World Bank recapitulates this racist ideology in their claim that the indigenous people do not know how to make good use of their resources. Yet the World Bank’s solution—to develop the infrastructure and the economic potential of the marginalized zones—only serves to fortify the capitalist nation state, rather than resolve the situation of poverty. In short, the myth of modernity is a tautology that allows the capitalist nation state to continue the constant exploitation that it requires. The myth goes so far as to fantasize that the indigenous people are not capable of being social subjects or political actors (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 151). Due to the myth of modernity, the Mexican government did not believe that the indigenous people started the Zapatista uprising in 1994; instead the state assumed that the indigenous were misled by foreign instigators (152). At the heart of the Zapatista movement, the indigenous people are challenging this myth.

3.

To avoid assimilation into the homogenous nation-state, some indigenous communities began creating their own political organizations. The myth of modernity can explain why many of *los coletos* of San Cristobal were shocked when the EZLN invaded their town (Díaz 1995, 14). They could not believe that the indigenous people had the capacity to organize themselves. Had the inhabitants of San Cristobal been paying attention, they would have seen ongoing organization in the Lacandon Jungle decades prior to the public Zapatista uprising in 1994. Government repression of students and the killings that took place in Tlatelolco in 1968 were the impetus behind

groups like the National Liberation Front (FLN) that was founded by university students in Nuevo León and would later be established in nearly every major city in Mexico (Ibid. 58, 62).<sup>22</sup> In 1972, the Decreto de la Comunidad Lacandona was signed by President Echeverría and threatened to dislocate 37 communities in the Jungle; most of the threatened territories were found in what would become the EZLN base (59). Since 1972, Chiapas has been losing an average of 26,000 hectares of land each year due to deforestation that has not benefited the indigenous people of this region (Binford et al. 2001). In Mexico in the 1970s, rural movements strived to separate themselves from the monopolizing control of the PRI (Baronnet et al. 2011, 413). Members of the FLN helped to coordinate Tierra y Libertad, which would become the nucleus of the EZLN (Díaz 1995, 66). In 1975 La Unión Ejidos Quiptic Ta Lecubtesel was formed by 18 ejidos in the Patihuitz and San Quintín regions (71). Within only a few months, peasants, from other regions, who were also affected by the Decreto de la Comunidad Lacandona joined the union. Members of the union described their frustrations of being taxed by the government in exchange for supposed services that they never actually received (72). The peasants in the union came together in opposition of the fines that the federal authorities charged them for working on their own milpas and cutting firewood to cook.

The Emiliano Zapata Campesino Organizations (OCEZ) and the Independent Center of Agricultural Workers and Campesinos (CIOAC) are both examples of organizations that sought to construct coalitions opposed to government policies (Muñoz 2006, 257). These organizations fought for land through hunger strikes, blocking highways, kidnappings, and invasions of surrounding territories; both would later serve in

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<sup>22</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s, the FLN would begin to concentrate their activities in San Cristobal de las Casas and the guerrillas began to create networks in the highlands (Díaz 1995, 82).

operations of the EZLN (Díaz 1995, 84). Out of the CIOAC emerged the Independent Front of Indigenous Peoples (FIPI) that helped spearhead the claim of regional autonomy, which would later become a central demand of the Zapatistas (Barmeyer 2009, 56). By the late 1980s, FIPI helped to formalize many autonomous activities that were already occurring in Las Margaritas, like conflict resolution and development projects. In Chiapas these movements formed ejidos that were independent from the PRI and became known as the Rural Association for Collective Interest of Independent Unions (ARIC-UU) (Baronnet et al. 2011, 413). These forces represented the prototypes that organized the same social bases that would later become the EZLN.

In 1983, militants of the FLN arrived to the Lacandon Jungle to found the EZLN (Díaz 1995, 95, 98).<sup>23</sup> In 1986, the state threatened to evict those living on 3,062 hectares of land in the Ejido San Francisco due to the Decreto de la Comunidad Lacandona (105). In response, guerrillas of the EZLN began to travel through all communities of the Jungle to defend the communities from the havoc of the government, defining itself as a liberating force. The ARIC eventually created the Alianza Nacional Campesina Indígena Emiliano Zapata (ANCIEZ) that was the mobilizing force of 4,000 peasants that marched against NAFTA and the reform of Article 27, demanding the discontinuation of the seizure of their lands and the end of military presence in their territories (137). By the end of the 1980s, almost all members of the ARIC were also Zapatistas (122).<sup>24</sup>

The Zapatista uprising responded to the most recent attacks by the capitalist nation state—the amendment of Article 27 of the Constitution and NAFTA—that would

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<sup>23</sup> However, let it be noted that the politics of the FLN pose a stark contrast to that of the EZLN. While the FLN wanted to seize state power to impose socialism, the EZLN has never sought state power (Díaz 97).

<sup>24</sup> Eventually tensions between the EZLN and ARIC emerged because the ARIC maintained a better relationship with the state while some described the EZLN as more authoritarian.

facilitate the separation of their ejidos into privatized parcels and the suspension of price guarantees (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 103). It is important to note that the EZLN has affirmed that in striving for autonomy, the Zapatistas are not attempting a secessionist movement (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 16). Instead they demand the right to govern themselves, a right that is affirmed in Article 39 of the Mexican constitution. Autonomous organization would stop the perverse pairing that links ethnicity and marginalization by allowing the indigenous people to conserve and reproduce their communal organization. In theory, if autonomous, the state would no longer be able to plunder their resources. Also, the autonomous spaces must be found outside of the nation state because grassroots spaces offered by the nation-state are generally preemptive government strategies aimed to curb possible protest (Fox 2009, 528). Instead of the being coerced into the state's imposed top-down model, autonomy allows the indigenous communities to dispute the outside. Subcomandante Marcos describes the importance of autonomy eloquently:

It's the people who should be in charge. Why do we want some[one], who comes from somewhere else, who doesn't even know the folks here, if the folks themselves can organize and put one of their own in, and take turns [governing]...it's the communities themselves that name their authorities...because who better knows the[ir] problems...that way, if the person in charge begins to take the wrong path, we're watching him...and we can kick him out..." (Ibid. 531).

Marcos describes the importance of the Zapatistas governing themselves because an outside state official would not know the struggles that the indigenous communities face.

Additionally, Marcos explains that autonomous communities are able to hold their governing bodies more accountable because those whom are governing are from within.

Not only do autonomously organized communities allow for more transparency and accountability, they also allow for the potential of collective creativity and intellect (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 49). In essence, the creation of autonomous communities allows for the reimagining of a society outside of the capitalist nation state. Ergo, autonomous communities are perhaps the first step to achieving Karatani's mode of exchange D that is free and reciprocal. In Kant's terms, Zapatismo is the cultivation of another society as a regulative idea. This is to say that the Zapatistas had to first believe that another world outside the capitalist nation state could exist. While Kant recognizes the necessity of garnering this faith to create a society where humans treat each other as ends rather than mere means to an end, Gramsci explains the inherent difficulty in assembling this type of organization.<sup>25</sup> Olmedo, the founding director of the Interior Ministry's Center for Municipal Studies explains, "[t]he current municipality is the legacy of the... Conquest and Colonial period and was designed to impede community organization, and even to intentionally disorganize society, to weaken it to be able to dominate it.." (Fox 2007, 532). In other words, essentially the Zapatistas have put themselves to the tasks of envisioning another possible world while the productive forces of the capitalist nation state have remained intact.

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<sup>25</sup> Employing the following two principles from Gramsci's prison notebooks "1. That no social formation disappears as long as the productive forces which have developed within it still find room for further forward movement; 2. That a society does not set itself tasks for whose solution the necessary conditions have not already been incubated, etc." (Forgacs 2000, 263), elucidates the difficulty in establishing an organization outside of the current capitalist nation state formation.

In order to imagine a transformed social formation, the Zapatistas argue that autonomy is essential. Burguete examines the Zapatista rebellion and explains that shortly after the uprising it was evident in an interview with Issac, a member of Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee, that the indigenous people sought autonomy (1995, 21). He stated that to solve the current problem, each ethnic group would need to have its own government that governs with its own autonomy, without the fear of devastation or manipulation. For example, the EZLN has strived to create autonomous spaces because they recognize that they are part of a community that is culturally distinctive due to their painful, living history (Arias 2008, 111). Allow me to quote Martinez-Torres on this point:

The EZLN was forged in communities of colonists in the remote jungle area, on the poor rainforest soils found there... These communities were... mixed together with indigenous people of different languages groups and with mestizos as well... All faced the same enemies... [They were] displaced peoples, driven from their places of origin by diverse manifestations of capital and Mexican government policies, joined in a struggle for survival... In this process they gave *indigenusness* new importance, adding mestizo as yet another ethnic category.

Running contrary to the global trend toward ethnic conflict, the Zapatistas proved to be inclusive rather than exclusive. (Martinez-Torres 2006, 67)

As Martinez-Torres illustrates in this quote, in a sense the Zapatistas all share an ethnicity because they have lived a common past of oppression. Ergo the Zapatistas are united in a common cause, coming together to resist the injustices propelled against them by capitalist nation state. To retain their identity, memories, tradition and cultural dynamics

must be protected in the present and the future (Ibid. 112). The Third declaration from the Lacandon Jungle reiterates Issac's statement, explaining Zapatismo's demand for a politics that would recognize all forms of organization and governing styles, provided by each distinct community (Burguete 1995, 20). Díaz-Polanco argues that the indigenous populations will only be able to practice their communal lifestyle once they achieve regional autonomy (1997, 53). Burguete details the EZLN's model of autonomy that consists of an autonomy that is inclusive and regional (1995, 25). For autonomy to be inclusive, it must respect diversity (i.e. cultural, ethnic, religious, political, philosophical, etc.) and be a space where pluralities thrive and coexist. In many indigenous regions of Mexico, "municipal governments are often headquartered in market towns with centuries of colonial and neocolonial history as centers of racial domination and economic exploitation of the surrounding villages" (Fox 2007, 533). Ergo, without autonomy the indigenous communities will continue to be subject to the colonial legacy.<sup>26</sup> Thus, to create a Mexico that truly embraces multiculturalism, the indigenous people must claim their status as autonomous indigenous communities, requiring the state to recognize their cultural, political, and social economic rights (Arias 2008, 134). The EZLN is fighting for political recognition of their collective identity (135). For the autonomy to be inclusive, it must also be regional so that it is able to incorporate all of the communities and municipalities that make it up. The indigenous regions of Chiapas have experienced a weakness that results from being forced to remain isolated as "ejidos" or communities. Only once an inclusive sum of forces joins together to construct a regional autonomy will the separate indigenous communities be able to develop sustainably. The San Andrés

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<sup>26</sup> This racist colonial legacy is exemplified by the law that forbade indigenous people "from walking on the sidewalk until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century" (Fox 2007, 533).

Accords explain that without the regional autonomy of their lands, the Zapatistas will not be able to govern themselves in terms of “political, social, economic, and cultural organization” (Barmeyer 2009, 54).

Díaz-Polanco argues that autonomy comprises of three simultaneous levels, namely: communal, municipal and regional (1997, 53). The Zapatistas proposed their idea of the formation of Autonomous Pluriethnic Regions just nine months after their public uprising (Barmeyer 2009, 57). By the next year, seven Autonomous Pluriethnic Regions were declared that encompassed 38 municipalities. All communities found within the 38 municipalities joined the EZLN in refusing to vote in the municipal elections of 1995 and afterwards did not acknowledge the Mexican government’s elected candidates as legitimate (58). In order to create their own coexisting government, militants of The National Assembly of Indigenous People for Autonomy (an organization born out of FIPI) expelled PRI municipal officials to replace these positions with their own councils that were created at the community level. The autonomous regions refused to pay the government tax for their water and electricity usage (Stephen 1995, 97; see also Ross 2006, 249). Autonomy at the regional level is necessary so that the Zapatistas can compete and participate in organs of representation, not only at the local level but at the national level as well (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 54). In fact, the Zapatistas expected their newly established regional autonomy to allow them to participate as pluriethnic regions in the Congress of the Union but the Mexican government limited their autonomy to the local level (Barmeyer 2009, 59). In doing so, the Mexican state yet again refused the representation of the indigenous people of Chiapas. Barmeyer clarifies the organization of the local ejidos and communities explaining that they are “run by a council of



representatives, an executive coordination, a municipal indigenous council, a general assembly, and an executive commission of all communities involved” (59). Díaz-Polanco further asserts that only once the state alters the constitution, that historically excluded the Indians in order to create a centralized and homogenous nation, will a legal and thus sustainable step toward autonomy be made (1997, 57). He reiterates this idea by stating that only after constitutional revisions are made will the indigenous receive their sociopolitical rights, which will be fundamental in their fight for autonomy (59).

Yet this claim introduces a problem from a Karatanian perspective. Requesting the state’s recognition of regional autonomy could reinforce the capitalist nation state by legitimizing its very existence. If the Mexican state were to recognize the autonomy of indigenous communities, it would most likely do so by treating these communities as other nation-states dictated under the same rules of the free market system. Moreover, although the Mexican government and the EZLN concluded their negotiations with the signing of the San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture, the failure to amend the constitution in regards to indigenous rights proved that the Mexican state would not honor the accords (Speed and Reyes 2005, 56). The San Andrés Accords demanded that the Mexican state allow the indigenous people to choose their own leaders and exercise their own alternative structures of organization to make their own decisions (60). Notwithstanding the failure of the San Andrés Accords process, the Zapatistas would continue their movement, striving for autonomy and their rights unilaterally, instead of through legal reforms (56-7).<sup>27</sup> The failure of the Mexican state to honor the

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<sup>27</sup> The Zapatista’s practice of their right to self-determination without the state’s approval contends with the idea that rights must come from the state and can only be protected by the state (Speed and Reyes 58). Rather the Zapatistas demonstrate that rights are present in their collective practice. Hence Marcos’ statement, “We the Zapatistas want to *exercise power*, not take it” (76).

San Andrés Accords served as an impetus for more substantial organization in the Zapatista municipalities. In 1998 the EZLN announced Autonomous Zapatista Rebel Municipalities (MAREZ), which was, essentially, a way for the Zapatistas to display their unilateral passage of the San Andrés Accords (Barmeyer 2009, 60). More substantial organization included programs such as health, education, and cooperative projects, which proved that although the Zapatistas sought legal recognition through the constitution, they were also ready to continue their autonomy project without the state's recognition (Speed and Reyes 2005, 58). More concretely in 2003, the Zapatistas publicly executed regional autonomy with their creation of the five *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Barmeyer 2009, 61). Commandant Ester explained in a speech that indigenous autonomy exists regardless of whether it is rooted in state law (58). Barmeyer explains: "[t]he Zapatistas...were struggling for legal recognition of the very practices that were already part of everyday life in their base communities" (58). Additionally, while working within the confines of the capitalist nation state, the Zapatistas confront the myth of modernity. The Zapatistas have decided to reject the help from government programs that attempt to pay compensatory to the peasants while supporting the global market because they understand that these payments are not a sustainable fix; rather compensatory payments are a part of the same strategy that threatens the rural population's very existence (Baronnet et al. 2011, 414).

Immediately following the uprising, the Zapatistas continued to rely on government funds; however, in 1996 the EZLN encouraged its supporters to reject government money as a way of heightening their resistance (Barmeyer 2009, 110). Barmeyer explains that the EZLN "emphasized indigenous dignity and autonomy [that]

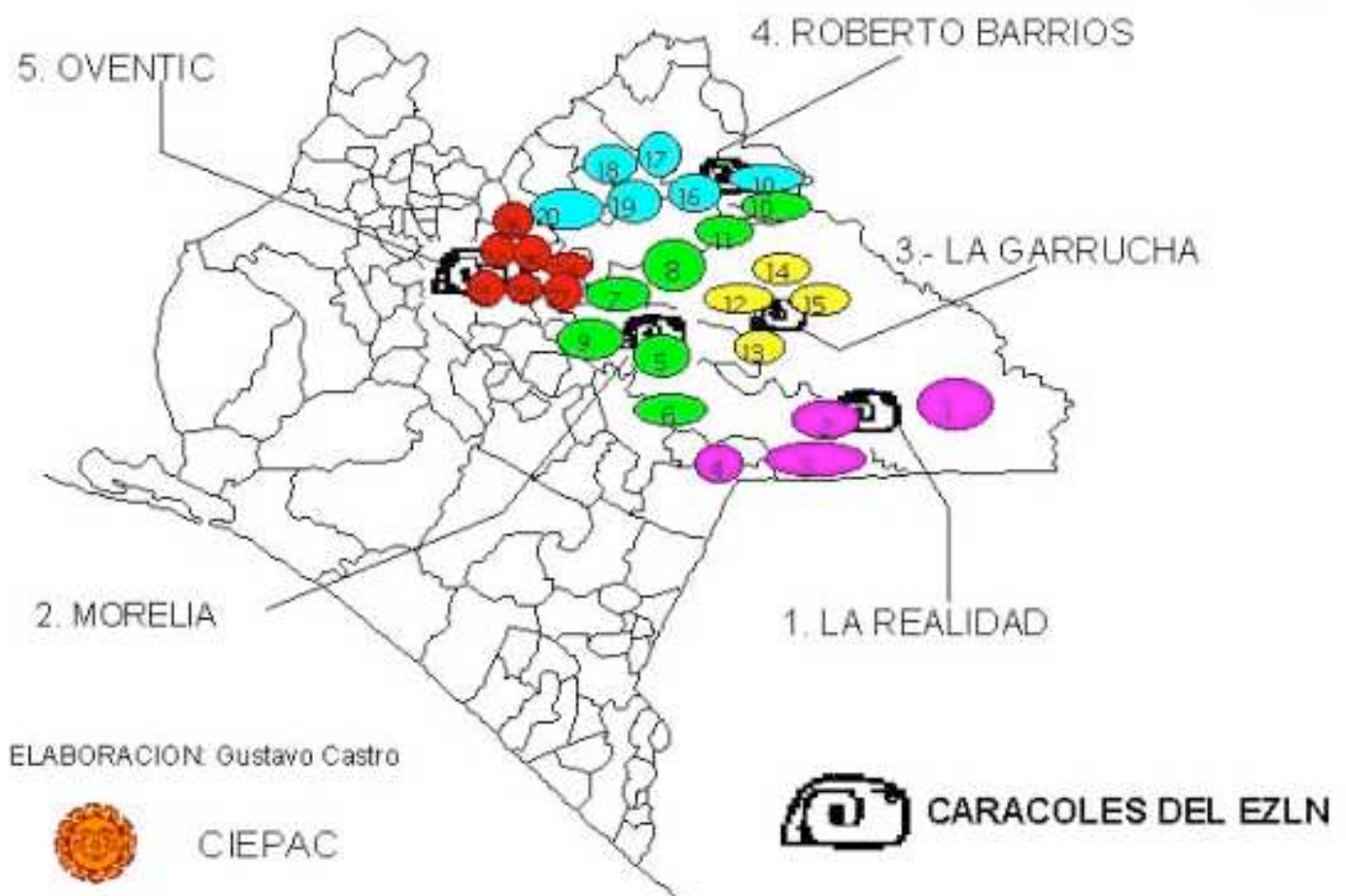
[e]ssentially both imply staying independent from the government, which the EZLN has persistently portrayed as corrupting and contaminating” (132). While abstaining from the use of governmental resources may have helped sustain autonomy and uphold a dignified self-image, the rejection of governmental funds and materials caused hardship to those who chose to live in resistance (113). Some Zapatistas increasingly saw their way of life as a sacrifice. Additionally, since the government’s counter-insurgency response to the Zapatista uprising included increasing its spending on aid programs in surrounding communities, numerous Zapatista strongholds began to split into factions (111, 113). Some Zapatistas dropped out of the movement in order to receive government aid or utilize new clinics or schools provided by the state. One example of these divisions took place in the community called 20 de Noviembre, where roughly 422 families opted for the institutional way of life based on government funds once again (114). Other families who did not want to be involved in the Zapatista movement sold their land to the government upon their departure (124). Still other families decided to join alternative political organizations, such as the ARIC independiente, giving them more leverage with the PRI, eventually allowing them to request governmental aid from PROGRESA and PROCAMPO (125).

In response, the Zapatistas communities have turned to ‘international civil society’. The Zapatistas have garnered international recognition and support. For example, roughly 200,000 supporters welcomed the Zapatistas when they arrived to Mexico City in 2001. This support is not only symbolic but rather tangible as well; NGOs have supported the Zapatistas’ projects to build schools, clinics, co-ops, etc., allowing the Zapatistas to more easily refuse government funds. Barmeyer explains that

“Zapatista autonomy and the de facto independence from the Mexican State came at the cost of new dependencies on outside actors and to the resources they provided” (2009, 63). Eventually the Zapatistas decided that they had become too dependent on the NGOs and thus decided to restructure their autonomous project by creating “Caracoles” (Ross 2006, 192). Let us examine this strategic step.

4.

Through the creation of the *Caracoles* (organized regions of autonomous Zapatista communities) and the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Committees of Good Government), the Zapatistas have created a new relationship between the state and society (Baronnet et al. 2011, 30). See a map of the *Caracoles* below (generated by the Centro de Investigaciones económicas y políticas de acción comunitaria):



The *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* are made up of representatives of each municipality (Ross 2003, 15). Created in 2003, the *Caracoles* demonstrated a shift in authority in the Zapatista autonomous communities from the political military component, namely the EZLN, to civilian dominance (Speed and Reyes 2005, 57; see also EZLN 2012). In addition, the *Caracoles* and *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* have sought to regulate the relationship between the Zapatistas and the outside world (Ross 2003, 15).

The *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* are forms of self-organization based on local customs and practices such as collective and consensus decision-making (Speed and Reyes 2005, 58, 60). The *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* strive to set up horizontal spaces that allow for greater participation through the creation of assemblies; these assemblies demand, the autonomous government complies (Baronnet et al. 2011, 30). To allow for greater participation, the *Juntas* rotate monthly with new representatives coming from the various autonomous municipalities (Ross 2006, 193). By rotating, each citizen has the opportunity to learn how to govern.<sup>28</sup> The *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* have also been responsible for maintaining a more equal allocation of resources between the Zapatista municipalities (Ibid. 194). The Zapatista government describes their philosophy as “mandar obedeciendo,” which means rule by obeying (Speed and Reyes 2005, 58). The EZLN explains that within federal power it sees few ruling without obeying or listening to others’ demands (Mignolo 1997, 5). In exercising their rights without waiting for the recognition of the state, the Zapatistas have succeeded in interrupting the regulatory

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<sup>28</sup> This is similar to Karatani’s suggestion of a lottery system. In Karatani’s words, “[l]ottery functions to introduce contingency into the magnetic power center. The point is to shake up the positions where power tends to be concentrated” (2003, 183). Much the same way, the *Juntas* often rotation allows for more participation and less concentration of power.

capacity of the hegemonic state institution (Baronnet et al. 2011, 42). An organization called the Red de Defensores has assisted Zapatista community members in upholding their autonomy by providing them help to employ the Mexican legal system to protect themselves from forms of state violence (Speed and Reyes 2005, 71-2). In doing so, they can successfully continue and expand their autonomous projects.<sup>29</sup>

Zapatismo attempts to establish new political subjects by inverting the position of the population base and the authority (Baronnet et al. 2011, 31). In doing so the Zapatistas are redefining democracy after years of repression and victimization by the nation-state's sovereignty (Mignolo 1997, 6). Instead of waiting for the state to broaden their liberal definition of democracy to supposedly insert the excluded, the Zapatistas implement their own theory of social organization in order to break with their historical experiences of exclusion. However, the Zapatista's idea of autonomy is not based solely on the jurisdictional control of territory. Instead the autonomous communities and regions also assume government functions and provide social programs to contest the validity of the official government that abandons its commitments to the marginalized groups (Baronnet et al. 2011, 414). Speed and Reyes further explain that the inception of neoliberal politics that came with the collapse of the socialist bloc have led to the emergence of alternative modes of social organization and solidarity along with a greater NGO presence (2005, 53).<sup>30</sup> These alternative social programs that the Zapatistas

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<sup>29</sup> The Red de Defensores differs radically from other NGOs in the following two ways: (1) it does not have a top-down structure but rather "concentric circles" where communities are found at the center, defensores in the next ring and an advisory council in the outermost ring; (2) it does not wait for the state to acknowledge or verify its rights so that it does not further legitimize the sovereign (Speed and Reyes 2005, 69-70)

<sup>30</sup> It must be noted that indigenous communities find themselves in a hierarchical structure where NGOs hold much power and often spread the neoliberal doctrine (Speed and Reyes 2005, 55). Also the Zapatistas' dependence on NGOs reduces their autonomy (69).

provide include health, education, and justice; and each program represents a manifestation of resistance that is an integral part in the battle for autonomy (Baronnet et al. 2011, 415).

Zapatismo recognizes that the indigenous people have suffered years of exclusion, while also acknowledging the hegemonic structure within their own social movement that still denies access to social sectors such as women (Ibid. 519). The indigenous women explicitly suffer from the increased state militarization in their communities as the state uses sexual violence as a counterinsurgency tool. Since 1994, Amnesty International has documented 60 sexual assaults against indigenous and peasant women by the Mexican army. The sexual violence against women exemplifies the patriarchal Mexican state. Women demand rights over their bodies as a response to the acts of sexual violence they have encountered and it is evident that the EZLN is attempting to confront this hegemonic power structure by the amount of women that have leadership positions throughout the *Caracoles* (Ibid. 371). Additionally, the Zapatistas show their commitment to gender equality in their political discourse (372). The EZLN institutionalized changes to allow women to be apart of assemblies and generated space for the development of women run projects that enabled women to organize themselves and publicly dispute the gender hierarchies (389). Many women participated in a health project emphasizing the use of medicinal plants that has started the recuperation of local medicinal knowledge (372). Working in the health sector has given women Zapatistas the confidence and capacity to confront and renegotiate gender, ethnic, and class relationships in their families, communities, and regions. These health projects work to

improve the health of the communities while allowing a higher level of autonomy for the communities since they no longer depend on governmental public health programs.

Despite the commitment to gender equality in political discourse and the implementation of certain programs, women continue to face exclusion in the Zapatista communities. While in Chiapas I had the chance to visit Caracol III, La Garrucha, where I observed some of the gender disparities. Women and men sat on separate sides in church on Sunday; when mass ended, the females waited until all of the males had filed out before they stood up to leave. Moreover, the men stood around talking amongst themselves for hours after the mass but the women and girls disappeared quickly. I later learned that the women had gone to take care of the kids or to the milpa to collect corn while some of the girls were milling corn to make pozól or tortillas. In addition, I met one family whose 15 year old daughter had stopped going to school to help her mother with household chores, while the son, who was two years older, still attended school. This appeared to be a trend as the daughter explained that she would not have wanted to stay in school anyway because very few girls her age still went to school. Niels Barmeyer made similar observations explaining, “[t]raditionally, the women are expected to stay around the house to take care of the children and animals” (2009, 98). He also found that men typically held the most important governmental positions in the communities, as well as holding the ejidos (100).<sup>31</sup> Ross notes that there was a major absence of women chosen as representatives to serve at the regional level with only 1% of the Junta del Buen Gobierno women (2006, 242). The number of women becoming insurgents in the EZLN has increased; however, this does not mean that they have been

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<sup>31</sup> Yet Barmeyer also find that “[t]he strength of patriarchal tendencies has differed from region to region” (100).



able to transform society completely for equality (Barmeyer 2009, 99). In an interview with Barmeyer, one Zapatista explains, “[m]en are just better off...whether they stay in their communities or leave to find work up north. In the village, they are free to go where they want and to do what they want. A woman cannot do this. She has to stay in the house, else people start talking badly of her” (99). She continues explaining that woman who migrate oftentimes face even harsher realities such as the ceaseless threat of rape and violence. Ergo, although Zapatismo may share their ideals of creating an egalitarian society, it is evident through observations and interviews that there is still much work to be done, on the ground, to work towards a more just community.

Prior to the installation of the autonomous health programs, in 1951, the National Indigenous Institute (INI) started a health program in Chiapas (Baronnet et al. 2011, 373). Behind the guise of bettering health, the program attempted to assimilate indigenous communities to the “modern mestizo” (375). Part of the effort to assimilate the indigenous communities was evidenced by the INI doctors’ lack of respect for and acceptance of the indigenous’ medicinal practice, calling it “magical-religious” (375). The expressions of the doctors led people to believe that, due to the ignorance of the indigenous people, they were responsible for their deficient health, another manifestation of the myth of modernity. Ergo, the EZLN’s own separate health programs strengthen the autonomy of the indigenous communities, while simultaneously supporting women in their quest for greater independence. As Castillo explains, “[t]he participation of women in the Zapatista movement...destabilizes gender roles within their communities and challenges exclusionary Mexican state policies” (2008, 153).

5.

Another aspect of the Zapatista's autonomy is their control of education programs. In the early 1960s, the number of state and federal monolingual schools began to increase in the highlands of Chiapas (Baronnet et al. 2011, 198). In the 1980s, throughout Latin America, the indigenous communities demanded an increase in the awareness of the importance of intercultural projects as a step towards cultural decolonization. The Zapatistas thought it crucial to possess political autonomy in the educational system as well. Multiple indigenous organizations agreed, reflecting on the significance of the construction of regional alternative liberating pedagogies to transform the national school curriculum. The insurgent radio station (dedicated to advancing the ideas of the EZLN) explains that the education the federal government provides serves to disperse ideas that function to aid the hegemonic state structure, which oftentimes drives the indigenous people to neglect their roots, history, situation, culture, language, and communal form of organization (Ibid. 200). Thus, the Zapatistas find it essential to deconstruct these relations of discrimination by producing educational spaces of recognition founded on their own style of organization (198). The communities themselves are the social subjects because they actively participate in committees, councils, commissions, and assemblies that plan the autonomous educational programs that they find to be comprehensive and culturally pertinent (44-5). Similar to the inverted power structure of the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*, the autonomous educational system breaks away from the structure of indoctrination, provided by the Mexican state, which imposes a particular exclusive pedagogy. A singular state pedagogy cannot possibly be inclusive of the multitude of experiences that are found within the state; rather the state

assists in building a singular exclusive national identity through the maintenance of its social programs like education. Therefore, within five year of the uprising of the EZLN, without waiting for legal authorization from state officials, almost all 38 municipalities had put into practice their own system of education (Ibid. 202). The autonomous schools prepare children, adolescents, and adults to be genuine participants in their autonomous communities instead of mere passive recipients (46). At the same time, the autonomous education experience may supply a constructive assessment of the politics of the state that their particular community must confront.

At the root of their autonomous education, the Zapatistas are challenging the state's definition of citizenship. The nation state claims to seek a tradition of egalitarianism while it forces a homogenizing concept of citizenship (Ibid. 115). Nation states construct citizens based upon the idea that there is an equality between all individuals, ignoring the unequal social structures that confine society. Through education, the Zapatistas are reclaiming their right to recognize their own understanding of society, one that implies a questioning of the exclusive notion of citizenship that the state produces (116). The autonomous Zapatista municipalities have attempted to embrace their multiethnic condition that opposes and denounces the egalitarian and exclusive notions of liberal citizenship. Stephen explains that Zapatismo has attempted to embrace pluralism due to the local diversity of the Zapatsitas that includes Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, and other Mayans or mestizos (some of whom come from other regions of Mexico) (1995, 90).

However, Saldaña-Portillo notes that in the EZLN's 1995 negotiations with the government, the very townships that the Zapatistas hoped to reclaim and organize based

on their own indigenous identity were in fact a product of Spanish colonialism (2006, 33).<sup>32</sup> Saldaña-Portillo explains:

Spanish colonialism universalized Indian identity, as all inhabitants of the Americas were rendered “Indian”—regardless of their heterogeneous cultures and political organizations—in contradistinction to Spaniards... [yet paradoxically] engineered...thousands of atomized “Indian” towns to produce *and contain* Indian difference” in order to facilitate the colonial processes. (35)<sup>33</sup>

For example, the colonial powers’ ability to create a dialectically universal and particularistic “Indian difference” allowed the Creole elites to later seize the Aztec struggle as their own, as they fought for independence against Spain (36). However, at the same time, the state uses force to impose an ethnocentric idea of nation and nationality, facilitating the hegemonic culture’s judgment of other cultures and societies (Baronnet et al. 2011, 119). In other words, the Creole nationalists first used the “Indian difference” to generate the imagined difference between themselves and the Spaniards that was necessary to claim independence (Saldaña-Portillo 2006, 37). Yet, afterwards, in newly independent Mexico, the “Indian difference” became a threatening dilemma, the antithesis to nation building. The fickleness in regards to citizenship has been applied throughout history (from the colonial period to the fight for Mexico’s independence); the

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<sup>32</sup> The Spanish’s colonial townships transformed various communal nuclei into a homogenous milieu of “Indian” ethnicity, destroying pre-existing political, economic, social, and cultural organization (*Unbecoming Modern* 33).

<sup>33</sup> This process occurred to allow for the colonial power to economically exploit the colonized (Saldaña-Portillo 2006, 34).

idea of nation continues to be manipulated today as an integral part of the capitalist nation state's strategy.<sup>34</sup>

The idea of liberal citizenship hinges on state nationalism through its fabrication of a shared history, culture, and language (Barmeyer 2009, 5). Ergo, as Saldaña-Portillo describes, "Indian difference" is only praised today insofar that it is a disappearing culture worth cherishing because the "perfect" Mexican citizens will be mestizos whom embrace their "Indian difference" for atavistic pride (2006, 39). Through cultural and educational reform, the Mexican state attempts to freeze the idea of indigeness into a romantic snapshot of historical culture that negates its very continuance today. In this way the state assists in maintaining a collective identity for its nation, which is a crucial aspect to the maintenance of modern nation states.

The Zapatistas want to challenge the state's idea of liberal citizenship so that they have the opportunity to be included in the Mexican state without having to renounce their identity. As the EZLN describes, "[l]a cuestión indígena no tendrá solución si no hay una transformación radical del pacto nacional. La única forma de incorporar con justicia y dignidad, a los indígenas a la nación, es reconociendo las características propias en su organización social, cultural y política" (Arias 2008, 138). In this quote the EZLN reiterates that there would need to be a radical shift in the national contract for the indigenous' own social, cultural, and political characteristics to be recognized and embraced. However, Saldaña-Portillo draws attention to the challenges that the Zapatistas will continue to face in their rejection of liberal citizenship since, after all, they are still products of colonial modernity (2006, 40). After many indigenous people

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<sup>34</sup> Today U.S. imperialists support Mexican elites as the U.S. provides them with armored personnel carriers, helicopters increased military training (in 1997, 757 Mexican officers were being trained in the U.S.), and roughly \$37 million in military assistance (Domínguez and Fernández de Castro 2009, 49).

migrated from the highlands of Chiapas to the Lacandon Jungle, the EZLN tried to search for democracy through its re-creation of multiethnic townships (a reflection of the colonial past) while confronting the state's economic integration projects in this region (42). Thus, the Zapatistas are a product of continued colonial struggle and, dialectically, resist the current state "development" projects. However, still in the struggle for autonomy, the Zapatistas are fighting to change the dominant notion of nationality backed by the state. The EZLN states, "somos Mexicanos... pero también somos indígenas. Esto quiere decir que reclamamos un lugar en la nación Mexicana pero sin dejar de ser lo que somos" (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 16). This quote clarifies that the Zapatistas are not attempting to create a separatist movement; instead they are asking to be included and respected in the Mexican nation without needing to reject their identity. The Zapatista's refuse the essentialist position of ethnic identity that places the "other" as a part of the past and thus negates the possibility of his or her continued existence (Baronnet et al. 2011, 119). Claiming their rights as indigenous Mexicans, the Zapatistas do not propose to cut off their relationship with the Mexican state, nor do they oppose their fundamental rights or responsibilities as citizens of the state (132). Rather they look for the recognition of a form of diversity that will generate an outline for inclusivity. I agree with Patricia Huntington's claim that the demand for inclusion will be impossible to achieve so long as the Mexican state continues to engage the myth of modernity, which does not allow the Zapatistas an equal level at the start of the negotiation (Wilkerson & Paris 2001, 106).

6.

Their call for inclusivity is not egocentric; instead the Zapatistas call for “un mundo en donde quepan muchos mundos” (a world in which many worlds fit) (Baronnet et al. 2011, 521). In other words, the Zapatista movement appreciates that there are innumerable people that suffer due to the exclusion that the capitalist nation state exudes.<sup>35</sup> This recognition is evident in the following discourse of Mayor Ana María in the 1996 International Gathering:

Detrás de nosotros estamos ustedes. Detrás de nuestros pasamontañas está el rostro de todas las mujeres excluidas. De todos los indígenas olvidados. De todos los homosexuales perseguidos. De todos los jóvenes despreciados. De todos los migrantes golpeados. De todos los muertos de olvido. De todos los hombres y mujeres simples y ordinarios que no cuentan, que no son vistos, que no son nombrados, que no tienen mañana. (Mignolo 1997, 4)

María says that the Zapatistas feel that all excluded—mentioning all ostracized women, indigenous, homosexuals, rejected youth, beaten immigrants, forgotten dead, and any other ordinary man or woman that do not count and do not have a future—are behind them in the same fight for inclusion.

Adding complexity to the situation, the capitalist nation state seizes words like “multiculturalism” and “diversity” to use in their discourse and national laws, making it seems as though it has taken strides towards creating a more inclusive society (Arias 2008, 115). Western Europe and the United States began to incorporate multiculturalism

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<sup>35</sup> Speed and Reyes argue that the Zapatista’s philosophy of a world where many worlds fit often is an ideal rather than a successful practice due to the diversity (both ethnically and politically) of the Zapatista regions (59). However, the alternative philosophy that the Zapatista’s have created is essential to Karatani’s notion of a regulative idea.

as a discourse in response to xenophobia and nativism (131). Liberal multiculturalism claims that cultural minorities will be protected indirectly through the guarantee of civil rights and individual liberties (138). The EZLN rejects this premise because the theory of basic individual rights does not protect their collective rights (139). In addition, paradoxically, xenophobia is born out of the capitalist nation state and thus true multiculturalism will not be delivered so long as we remain within this social formation.<sup>36</sup> The Zapatista's foundation of autonomy serves as an inspiration for others who would like to join the struggle, according to their own experiences, to build another possible world.

The 6th declaration from the Lacandon Jungle called for “la otra campaña” (the other campaign)—not composed of the political class—to define a strategy of alliances with global civil society for a horizontal approach to politics (35). The Zapatistas see that to advance and strengthen their internal organization, they must unite their struggle with other local, regional, national, and international fights against the homogenizing capitalist nation state (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 89).<sup>37</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> declaration recognizes that indigenous rights will not be achieved under the current organization of the capitalist nation state and thus have invited others to join them in their resistance against global capitalism (Arias 2008, 130). In other words, inclusion of the Zapatistas cannot be attained so long as the capitalist nation state continues to exist. Zapatismo is developing its own autonomy while also calling on civil society to recognize and seize its own social

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<sup>36</sup> Critics of the multicultural politics practiced by the state argue that the state's “diversity” discourse has weakened the social welfare state and social solidarity. In addition the multicultural discourse is responsible for the slow incorporation of the immigrant minorities into social and economic activities; and causes isolation and segregation (Arias 2008, 132).

<sup>37</sup> Aligning with international solidarity is essential from a practical perspective as well. A strong accompanying civil society can help protect the Zapatistas from attacks by Mexican paramilitary groups and allow for the continual development of their communities by sustaining vigilance in the communities.



spaces, thereby creating a more democratic and horizontal society (Baronnet et al. 2011, 33). By calling on civil society, the Zapatistas are striving to transcend the state and nation. The EZLN hopes to unite with other social sectors to achieve their goals together (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 18). The EZLN understands that the indigenous will only continue to fortify their fight if they join with workers, peasants, students, teachers, and so on.<sup>38</sup>

However, “la otra campaña” presents the Zapatistas with a difficult task: how to create a popular and democratic left movement that encourages unification and solidarity but at the same time recognizes the singularity of each context (Baronnet et al. 2011, 186)? Saldaña-Portillo provides an answer to this question through an illustration of the 1996 International Meeting for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism that took place at Oventic (2006, 42). An EZLN comandante asked approximately 5,000 visitors, coming from all over the world, for silence (43). Although the crowd quieted down, the comandante refused to begin until the crowd was completely silent for ten minutes. Not only did the silence represent the years, preceding the public uprising, where the Zapatistas organized without a sound; it also symbolized the countless years they were silenced by colonial and post-colonial oppression (45). With the maintenance of total silence, the Zapatistas soon filed in and sat around the visitors. Only later did Saldaña-Portillo begin to understand the many metaphors of identities that the Zapatistas had created with this exercise of silence (44). The visitors represented the Mexican nation, caught off guard when the Zapatistas entered and surrounded them; however, the visitors (illustrating the rest of the Mexican nation) were also silent, which meant that they too

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<sup>38</sup> In this sense the Zapatistas are calling for a unification of the labor and consumer movements. Karatani finds this to be essential in the struggle to transcend the capitalist nation state.

shared the pains of the neoliberal state's most recent policies (45). Allow me to quote Saldaña-Portillo at length:

[T]he many Western and Westernized subjects present before the Zapatistas, in the habit of thinking of ourselves as freely constituted and purposeful individuals—were also subject to neoliberalism, subjugated by its trajectory...these multiple identifications—constitutively fleeting and poignantly inconclusive—identifications that are central to the Zapatistas' project of wresting national and international terms of political representation for themselves...Initiated by the Zapatistas, this identification between the visiting outsiders and the indigenous subalterns was not a naïve erasure of the difference between positionalities. When the Zapatistas joined the visitors in this performative silence... they encircled us, they filled the bleachers at the margin of the arena. As such, they chose to represent the imbalance in political, economic, and cultural power that sustains the centrality of the Western nonindigenous subject vis-à-vis the indigenous subject. (45-7)

In this exercise of silence, the Zapatistas demonstrate their understanding of the deep complexities of national identities. The Zapatistas wanted the outsiders to first comprehend the singularity of the context of exclusion and oppression in their 500 years of struggle. However, the metaphor did not stop there; rather it continued, compelling the visitors to scrutinize their own silence in the presence of the homogenizing capitalist nation state. Saldaña-Portillo summarizes the silence as facilitating a “universal identification *in* difference... [that allows] alterity and universality [to] converge” (2006, 47). The EZLN does not attempt to create one transnational identity or culture. Instead,

the Zapatista movement strives to awaken a transnational consciousness while still defending the pluralities that it seeks to defend. Thus, the Zapatistas have been successful, nationally, in rallying Mexicans against the PRI as well as, internationally, in garnering the attention of the Left and working class against neoliberalism (Ibid. 50). Here it becomes evident that the Zapatista movement has been partially successful in transcending the nation, as it has been able to universalize the concept of the Indian subaltern (evident in chants such as “todos somos indios”) in relation to the war that the neoliberal state is waging against civil society. Heidy Sarabia examines two Zapatista groups in the San Francisco Bay Area and argues that transnational networks are centered on non-institutional players from civil society, rather than nation-states (2011, 357). Zapatismo’s defense of the pluralities is evidenced when Subcomandante Marcos, addressing the Indian people of Mexico, states, “[w]e are not your spokespersons but just one voice among many. We do not come to tell you what to do but to ask humbly to be heard” (Ross 2006, 73).

Despite their attempt to transcend the nation, Karatani contends that Kant’s world civil society does not occur in reality because “[p]eople cannot be members of world-civil-society in the same sense that they belong to their communities...The individual becomes an individual person primarily within one’s own nation language (nation)...[Kant] never denied that everyone always belongs to a certain community” (2003, 101&104). In accordance with Karatani’s logic, Sarabia notes that “[o]ne of the most important characteristics of the EZLN is its indigenous character, given that most members of the EZLN are indigenous Mayas (2011, 358). Thus it seems that we cannot expect the Zapatistas to transcend the nation, rather the Zapatistas define their struggle

through recognizing their subaltern position as indigenous Mayans in relation to other communities. Following Karatani's reasoning, Wainwright argues that identity based movements will fail to create mode of exchange D (or associationism) because they fall back to nation (9 Nov. 2012).

Still, the Zapatistas hope to go beyond being 'just an indigenous movement' to sparking a sweeping democratic movement that encompasses all voices and struggles (Saldaña-Portillo 2006, 51). The 6th declaration from the Lacondan Jungle clearly articulates a revolution occurring from both the inside and the outside, expressing local struggles that can be connected to national and international struggles looking for solidarity while maintaining the importance of the consolidation of their own autonomies (Baronnet et al. 2011, 170). José A Muños describes the first "Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalismo where 3,000 activists representing 43 countries and five continents were in attendance in Chiapas, Mexico" (2006, 255). This international meeting is another illustration of how the Zapatista movement is surpassing national boundaries; Marcos called the meeting an "intercontinental network of resistance...it has no central command or hierarchies..." Through international "encuentros" and "la otra campaña" they are attempting to transcend nation as they invite others from all over the world to join in the same fight. The Zapatistas' paradoxical embrace of both plurality and universality challenges the long-established trajectory of modernity endorsed by the state (Saldaña-Portillo 2006, 52). The Zapatistas recognize the overwhelming number of socially-vulnerable groups and less fortunate sectors of society and thus, call on a peaceful, civil uprising from below to bring down the political system that has caused these very inequalities (Arias 2008, 147). Allow me to quote a

passage from the sixth declaration of the Lacandon Jungle:

no queremos luchar sólo por su bien de nosotros o sólo por el bien de los indígenas de Chiapas, o sólo por los pueblos indios de México, sino que queremos luchar junto con todos los que son gente humilde y simple como nosotros y que tienen gran necesidad y que sufren la explotación y los robos de los ricos y sus malos gobiernos aquí en nuestro México y en otros países del mundo... Y lo primero que vimos es que nuestro corazón ya no es igual que antes, cuando empezamos nuestra lucha, sino que es más grande porque ya tocamos el corazón de mucha gente buena... cuando tocamos los corazones de otros pues tocamos también sus dolores. O sea que como que nos vimos en un espejo... Pues en el mundo lo que queremos es decirle a todos los que resisten y luchan con sus modos y en sus países, que no están solos, que nosotros los zapatistas, aunque somos muy pequeños, los apoyamos y vamos a ver el modo de ayudarlos en sus luchas y de hablar con ustedes para aprender, porque de por sí lo que hemos aprendido es a aprender. (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional 2005)

From this passage, it is evident that the Zapatistas identify their fight with all other groups that are also battling the exploitation and exclusion put forth by the capitalist nation state. The 6<sup>th</sup> declaration illustrates that the Zapatistas see mirror images of themselves through the pains of others who are also struggling. Thus, in this declaration, the Zapatistas make a commitment to support and learn from others' fights.

While listening to others' struggles, the Zapatistas strive to forge their own plural society. Alejandro Cerda García explains that the creation of numerous autonomous municipalities allows for the appreciation of a multiethnic society that directly challenges

the classic notion of citizenship that excludes and exterminates the indigenous people among other marginalized groups (2011, 41). The creation of a shared history, common language, dominant religion and culture has served the goals of the state, in its supposed process of making all citizens equal, so that it can then generate a group of homogenous rights for each individual, while building a common national identity (Arias 2008, 140). Zapatismo does not attempt to create a centralized or hierarchical system, evidenced by the lack of uniformity within the actual practices of the communities (522). Nor does the Zapatista movement aim to take power; rather it tries to create autonomous spaces that creatively resist the existing hegemonic structure (43).<sup>39</sup>

Thus, following Kantian logic, it appears that Zapatismo has embraced the transcendence of the capitalist nation state as a regulative idea, not a constructive idea.<sup>40</sup> The Zapatistas are not imposing their practices on others. Díaz-Polanco notes that prior to the Zapatista uprising, autonomy seemed like an exotic or delirious demand; neither the Mexican government nor intellectuals accepted indigenous autonomy as a solution to the ethnic-national question (1997, 150). The EZLN brought to light the theoretical faith that is required for the transcendence of the capitalist nation state. After the 1994 Zapatista uprising, some intellectuals publicly sympathized with the cause and began to examine the principles of Zapatismo; a new enthusiastic spirit of hope for a different society was born among intellectuals (164).

In addition to studying Zapatismo, some have begun to examine solidarity economies, which “form part of a project: to put the human back at the centre of the economy” (Dacheux & Goujon 2012, 205). Solidarity economies respond to capitalism,

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<sup>39</sup> The Zapatistas describe part of this struggle as an “advance on the capital, defeating the federal army along the way” (Ross 2003, 15).

<sup>40</sup> See chapter 1, p.17-8

which measures efficiency through the production of wealth and excludes those whom are considered “inefficient” (González et al. 2003, 134). The capitalist nation state finds its faith in progress, arguing that the reason for the poverty is the inefficiency of the ejidos. The neoliberal ideology defends its policies of austerity towards the ejidos by fictitiously calling their rural subsistence economy unsustainable, shunning the ejidos for the lack of profit that they yield (Ibid. 410). These policies of austerity worsen the circumstances of the indigenous peasants and thus the Zapatistas chose to navigate their social movement outside the realms of the capitalist nation state. As neoliberal politics reduce the social welfare state, it is no coincidence that independent rural indigenous solidarity organizations have begun to flourish (González et al. 2003, 126).

These solidarity organizations, along with the solidarity market, hope to create alternative parameters to measure efficiency that could be based on the preservation of the environment and cultures or social justice instead of the accumulation of wealth (134). Solidarity economies attempt to initiate a new market that critically examines the effect of economic “progress” on human development in order to construct another market where groups of producers have more control over resources (Barkin 2012, 512). The states’ increasing role as the protector of capital instead of people and communities has left a space that has been filled by solidarity organizations (González et al. 2003, 134). The World Bank, IMF and the U.S. government imposed budget-cutting and free market policies on Mexico as a part of what they called “structural adjustment” for their debt. Although international financial institutions (i.e. the World Bank and IMF) and the U.S. may claim that their development programs aim to spur sustainable growth, Dacheux and Goujon argue that these programs are “aimed at pushing the globalisation

of the economy” (2012, 205). Following similar logic, Karatani contends that the state must not be seized to demolish capital; the state is an absolutely necessary entity for capital to function. The optimism remains because the Zapatista’s founding of autonomous spaces is a step to creating a separate identity that has the capacity to transform itself into an anti-capitalist subject (Martinez-Torres 2006, 43). Through its construction of an alternative society outside of the state, Zapatismo has the potential to practice politics in such a way that will create an economy that defends the communal organization of property.

7.

Not all social movements opposing capitalism have followed the same trajectory. Understanding the contrasts in methods provides insight to the Zapatista movement. European immigrants in Latin America started many modern production cooperatives but these approaches were often top-down and frequently converted into political parties (Vásquez-León 2010, 5). Similarly, socialist countries implemented a top-down model where the state managed cooperatives, claiming empowerment of the poor as its goal (6). In reality state-controlled cooperatives served the state and capital by expanding agricultural production. In the case of Mexico, powerful populist governments meant more state involvement in cooperatives that led to a hierarchical variance in skill and wealth.<sup>41</sup> Corruption by political parties was also common; for example, in the 1970s and 1980s, collective directors robbed resources and national parties found their core of

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<sup>41</sup> President Cárdenas (1934-40) started this legacy, having “had high hopes for the future of cooperative enterprises, which he believed would provide a viable alternative to both capitalist and communist systems of production” (Weston 1983, 387)



political control in fishing collectives and agricultural ejidos.<sup>42</sup> Regardless of whether in a capitalist or socialist state, the cooperatives were co-opted into reinforcements of the capitalist nation state.

Profit typically propels the cooperative's design. Hence many times "fashionable concepts of sustainable and alternative development, grassroots cooperatives, and indigenous communities as stewards of nature [have been used] as symbolic capital to lure Northern consumers" (Vásquez-León 2010, 9). González et al. further illustrates this problem explaining that frequently the indigenous communities become just receivers of values, as projects are imposed on them (2003, 131). For example, to be a part of the solidarity market, the indigenous communities must agree to abide by rules such as democracy (143).<sup>43</sup> Max Havelaar launched the solidarity label in 1989 as a response to consumers not producers; consumers developed an environmental and "third world" consciousness (126, 128).<sup>44</sup> This is to say that a consumer will only participate in the solidarity market once he or she has questioned the unequal relations between the north and south (156). The creation of solidarity economies and their accompanying markets requires both the producers and consumers to come together and agree to participate. Thus, collective decision-making requires intentionality. González et al illustrate this

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<sup>42</sup> Gabriel Gagnon examined cooperatives in Latin America and succinctly clarifies that "cooperatives in capitalist societies abandoned their role as social movements to become better integrated into the dominant capitalist system while cooperatives in socialist countries became little more than vehicles for the transmission of state policy" (Vasquez-León 2010, 6).

<sup>43</sup> While democracy generally plays an important role in maintaining internal cohesion of the organizations, peasants whom have been ousted from the solidarity market complain of excessive demands and sanctions (González et al 143-44). It appears that the expulsion of certain peasant organizations and the plethora of demands placed upon them reveal a paradox to the value of tolerance and inclusion that the solidarity market professes to integrate in the first place.

<sup>44</sup> Later as their environmental consciousness evolved, consumers would demand organic agriculture, which added another requirement that the indigenous organizations would have to scramble to meet (González et al 146).

idea stating, “la decision colectiva no es predecible, su construcción procede de un proceso politico marcado por la confrontación de ideas, proyectos, expectativas, intereses divergentes y relaciones de fuerzas” (134). Here González et al explain that collective organization does not occur automatically but rather is constructed through a political process where ideas, projects, expectations and separate interests are confronted.

We can relate this idea to Karatani’s interpretation of Kant’s regulative idea insofar that ideas must be challenged so that eventually reality can adjust itself to these new notions. A theoretical faith will not simultaneously construct itself; rather we must be willing to critically analyze our world to build this ‘reasoned faith’ in the confrontation of ideas. The Zapatistas and the network of supporters that have joined them in their struggle against the neoliberal state are offering symbolic and actual alternate spaces of organization (Speed and Reyes 2005, 60). Solidarity economies may offer one kind of alternate space of organization. Some equate solidarity with social justice because it calls for a more equal allocation of resources to better the lives of the marginalized sectors of society (González et al. 2003, 129). In this sense solidarity harkens back to Kant’s kingdom of ends that requires the treatment of others as free agents. Solidarity markets require people who are willing to buy solidarity coffee rather than another commercial brand, based on their convictions. Additionally, the solidarity market would not have emerged without the committed collaboration of organizations that the indigenous established throughout their agricultural battle and their demand for public services and the preservation of their ethnic identity (Ibid. 165).

However, a hierarchical power structure remains embedded within the solidarity market because participants of the solidarity market enter for distinct reasons. The

producers generally enter for practical purposes (i.e. the search for higher prices during commercialization) while the consumer enters with the end goal of creating altered normative values (Ibid. 131). Thus, the producers seldom have the opportunity to help generate the rules of the solidarity market that they then must abide by. Another example of the unequal power structure is illustrated in the second phase of the solidarity market where inspectors were contracted to make sure indigenous organizations were complying with previously defined standards for certification; this demonstrates the aspiration to boost consumer confidence (157).<sup>45</sup> Mutersbaugh explains that, “work rules meant to guarantee product quality may exclude some members, while practices meant to ensure co-op autonomy may create social tensions” (2002, 757).<sup>46</sup> Other examples of cooperatives, such as the Manduvira cooperative and the Guayaibi Unido cooperative, continue to depend on either international organization for “fair trade” or state based organizations like Mercosur. Thus, these types of cooperatives are not opposing globalization but rather are oftentimes co-opted into increasing the benefits of state based or international organizations. It is essential to examine what type of cooperative is functioning and in what form, with which aims, etc. Is it a “cooperative” that reinforces neoliberal policies and structural inequalities under the guise “alternative indigenous development” or a cooperative that truly works outside of the capitalist system?

To this end it is useful to ask to what extent the Zapatistas have been successful in the rejection of the exploitative system of capital. Richard Stahler-Sholk argues that the

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<sup>45</sup> The certification process introduces costs for the producers (i.e. cost of inspections and the right to use the stamp after certification) that are supposedly covered by the consumer (González et al. 2003, 157-8). All of these costs raise the price of the product and consumers will only be willing to pay so much.

<sup>46</sup> In addition, new co-op classes may form, which may change the local, social relations (Mutersbaugh 2002, 759). As this new co-op class uses village resources, as well as participates outside the local sphere, tensions sometimes arise.

question of economic sustainability of Zapatismo is difficult to analyze because there is not a fixed definition of sustainability and due to a lack of data (Baronnet et al. 2011, 430). Stahler-Sholk further contends that systems of production are never found in an unoccupied space, rather they are found in relation to policies installed by the state (431). Policies include the elimination of subsidies and programs of compensation on crops that were affected by the removal of the price supports; unequal public investment that supported commercial agroindustry more than ejido sectors; the channeling of significant government resources to non-Zapatista Chiapan communities since 1994 as a part of a counterinsurgency program. Despite the eliminations of compensations programs and the state's lack of investment in ejidos, a number of Zapatista communities have been able to sustain themselves through family production.

Many Zapatista communities engage in the field model of mainly family production where they produce corn; beans; and a few vegetables and fruits for their own consumption (Baronnet et al. 2011, 433). They control the commercialization of surplus production and limit purchases to years of inadequate harvests. Various communities sell coffee, animals, and occasional labor. Zapatista collective projects include those projects in the social sector such as health, education, potable water, training in agro ecology, women's rights, and human rights. The collective projects are coordinated by a rotating labor that generates a surplus (434). The majority of the surplus is sent to resolve communal matters or help the expenses of the promoters of education and health, whom work without receiving an income. Therefore, the generation of surplus is important because it allows for the planning and initiation of autonomous social projects that reinforce the community identity as a collective decision maker. The Juntas de Buen

Gobierno also established a 10% tax on external agencies that operate in the Zapatista territory, which is invested in a regional Zapatista fund to assist in the organization of strategies for alternative development.

One example of alternative development is the creation of cooperatives. Marcela Vásquez-León defines cooperatives as “dynamic community-based local organizations existing within wider social, political, and economic contexts” (2010, 4). Cooperatives emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a defense against the socioeconomic exploitation of workers (Uribe & Flores 2005, 11).<sup>47</sup> Through mutual help, cooperatives depend on a prolonged, voluntary and collective spirit of each participating individual to complement one another for a common cause (Meza et al. 3; see also Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 190; see also Uribe & Flores 2005, 11). Oftentimes the common causes are more social control over the distribution of wealth and the abolition of obstacles that oppose the equality of citizens due to the economic and social exclusion. Cooperatives abide by the following principles: voluntary and open association; democratic administration by their own members; economic participation of its members where each member contributes equally to the formation of capital that is common to the cooperative; and autonomous and independent organization (Meza et al. 5). Often cooperatives provide education and training so that its members are able to effectively contribute to the cooperative (6). Sometimes there is also an alliance between cooperatives (locally, nationally and internationally) to strengthen the cooperative movement. Cooperatives generally cater to a community interest to strengthen sustainable development through values such as self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, solidarity, honesty, openness, social

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<sup>47</sup> The first ideas of cooperativism manifested themselves in 1865 amongst a group of socialist students (Uribe & Flores 2005, 11). In 1927 the first law of cooperative societies was passed but failed to take large effect until the Cardenista period when a general law of cooperative fishing societies was passed (12).

responsibility and concern for others. In essence cooperatives and the solidarity market work together to turn values into productive resources (González et al. 2003, 127). This is to say that cooperatives and the solidarity market attempt to socially construct ethic values in such a way so that these particular values will end up adding value to the final product.

We can relate the idea of the cooperatives and the solidarity market working together as an illustration of the attempt to merge producer and consumer movements, which Karatani affirms is essential if capital is to be challenged. In this example the cooperatives represent the producer movement while the solidarity market that external agents and consumers have demanded exemplifies a consumer movement. The cooperatives and the solidarity market have recognized one another and works together to alter modern neoliberal mode of exchange. According to Martinez-Torres, sustainable development hopes to create a more equal division of resources to combat poverty while at the same time attempts to conserve the environment for future production (2006, 4). Sustainable development requires social and natural capital (3, 5). Social capital refers to required social relationships that allow people to effectively form social cohesion through associations depending on the norm of obligation. Martinez-Torres describes that “a sense of obligation is created through social norms and social relations... and that obligation is enforced through social sanctions... Calling on the obligations of others can reduce the costs of production for individuals and families and can make possible goals that otherwise wouldn’t be possible” (75).<sup>48</sup> The creation of social capital requires the development of a shared ethnic identity that helps bring people together to pursue a new

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<sup>48</sup> This exemplifies Karatani’s concept of nation, whereby the type of exchange that takes place is reciprocal but not free.

order in the global market (76). González et al. reiterates this idea explaining that solidarity coffee only came about due to a strong social fabric formed between peasant organizations (2003, 136). This social fabric was composed by a strong ethnic identity between indigenous groups due to a history of shared problems (i.e. land dispossession and social discrimination). Natural capital includes resources such as water, soil, forests, etc. (Marinez-Torres 2006, 76). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s a number of coffee coops formed, including CEPCP, UCIRI, UPCV, UCIZONI, CARTT, Union Majomut, ISMAM (65). UCIRI, located in Oaxaca, began exporting to alternative markets first, which allowed other organizations to follow its lead (Martinez-Torres 2006, 93; see also González et al. 2003, 137). Many of the coffee cooperatives rely on TCO (organized communal work) for their success. TCO involves mutual help between campesinos as they share labor in an organized production process. For example, it is evident that ISMAM supports TCO because their members organize themselves in such a way to be able to exchange labor collectively (Martinez-Torres 2006, 101). ISMAM extends this shared and inclusive type of organization, which is evident in their democratic organization where local members maintain a fair amount of autonomy, each community sends representatives to the general assembly, and there are six separate communities focusing on particular aspects of the cooperative (102). The majority of coffee cooperatives depend on a general assembly where representatives from the various communities come together to make overarching communal decisions (94). An executive committee, including the president, secretary, and treasurer, makes daily decisions. There is also a committee dedicated to overseeing the cooperative to watch for corruption. In the case of the cooperative Majomut, the executive committee carries out

marketing activities while the oversight committee helps to gather the crops and protect fixed assets (such as machines, trucks, coffee mill, storage facilities, etc.) (99). About 65% of its members come from communities with a Zapatista core.

In rural Mexico, coffee is one of the most important sources of income where the majority of coffee producers are small farmers that have between one and five hectares of space to grow coffee (Martinez-Torres 2006, 12). Recent neoliberal policies have caused major repercussions for the small farmers in the Lacandon Jungle (32). For example, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the World Bank and IMF imposed reforms to privatize and cut budgets that resulted in the dissolving of organizations that small farmers depended upon such as INMECAFE for technical assistance; credit; and subsidized transport and processing (63).

Thanks to the social capital that had been previously built in Chiapas, organizations emerged that helped many farmers survive the rapid drop in coffee prices (66).<sup>49</sup> Many of the indigenous coffee growers would later participate in the Zapatista rebellion. Mutvitz is a coffee cooperative whose majority of participants are Zapatista supporters and receives support from the international solidarity movement that supports the Zapatsitsas (75). The solidarity market claims to counter the exclusion that the neoliberal model of exchange engenders as producers (often with the help of NGOs) attempt to liberate themselves from the control of large corporations (González et al. 2003, 126).<sup>50</sup> Mutvitz has flourished thanks to solidarity markets (Martinez-Torres 2006,

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<sup>49</sup> Coffee prices decreased in the late 1980s due to the collapse of the Mexican National Institute of Coffee, as well as the break down of the International Coffee Agreement under neoliberal reforms (Beadle & Miller-McCune 2011; see also Fridell 2007, 82).

<sup>50</sup> Yet international organizations such as FLO (Fairtrade Labeling Organizations) engender exclusion by favouring organizations with export experience instead of “unorganized” individual producers that have less land to cultivate and thus less yield (González et al. 2003, 171)



75). Although Mutvitz originally formed out of internal production of social capital, they have experienced continued success as they take advantage of external support. External support includes administrative staff and advisors that the peasant organization hires (Ibid. 94). While the external support allows many indigenous organizations to cease their reliance on the state, this same external support comes with a cost. The use of external professionals weakens the autonomy of the organization (González et al. 2003, 147). Also, oftentimes the staff members end up with a disproportionate amount of power due to their background in the coffee industry and their contacts in the market (Martinez-Torres 2006, 94; see also González et al. 2003, 140). Thus disagreements may occur between the employed staff and the peasant leaders that risk a division or disintegration of the cooperation itself (Martinez-Torres 2006, 94). In addition, producers that lack external advisors or do not have key connections will most likely be excluded from the solidarity market itself (González et al. 2003, 140). Parra and Moguel argue, “it is impossible for indigenous campesino coffee producers to take complete control of marketing their coffee due to issues of language...and forms of community...knowledge of international market, and the ability to deal with funder and donor organizations” (Martinez-Torres 2006, 96). Thus, it seems that external advisors could not be eliminated because the coffee cooperatives depend on the external staff for insertion into the market.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps MutVitz proves this theory false; their organization exchanged external professionals for campesino promoters due to their heightened familiarity with the area (Ibid. 107). Eliminating the middleman, MutVitz members

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<sup>51</sup> An organization is not guaranteed the sale of their products once they are accepted into the solidarity market because they still face competition to other organizations (González et al. 2003, 141).

make about 62 cents more per kg of coffee than others in the same region who are not apart of MutVitz. This has encouraged more farmers to join the cooperative.<sup>52</sup>

Coffee cooperatives exemplify just one among many alternative spaces of production. The Mexican Solidarity Network describes another one of these alternatives namely, the Zapatista women's artisan cooperatives, many of which started before the 1994 Zapatista uprising, where the women are "...actively involved in design, production and marketing decisions." While women are empowered in the cooperative, the laborers in the maquiladora are "nothing more than replaceable cogs in a profit-driven machine." The artisan cooperatives have developed associations with international solidarity groups. The women involved in the cooperatives control both the production and the marketing of the products that they make, which opposes the previous model where the merchant buys the products cheaply from the indigenous communities only to mark the price up when selling them products in the urban market. In addition, the Zapatistas have cooperative projects that include vegetable gardens, rabbit or sheep breeding, artisan production of candles or clothing, communal stores or warehouses, and agreements of fair trade (Baronnet et al. 2011, 433).

Cooperative producers demanding fairer wages have given rise to solidarity stores across the United States and Europe. The Mexican Solidarity Network explains that "[f]air compensation has been a common demand among all workers throughout capitalist history, from unionized industrial workers to secretaries to campesino farmers..." In the 1960s people began to mobilize themselves, demanding a more just market in opposition to the market that exploits and devalues people and the environment

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<sup>52</sup> Although it still must be recognized that many times NGOs replace the middleman in the solidarity market collaboration (González et al. 2003, 166).

(Martinez-Torres 2006, 35). This movement resulted in over 300 solidarity stores in Western Europe claiming to sell “socially responsible” products. Today some Mexican coffee cooperatives market their products in these shops. A similar initiative was started in the United States in 1985 by an organization called Equal Exchange. UCIRI (an indigenous union in Oaxaca) helped launch the fair-trade labeling movement when they explained to a Dutch NGO that they would not need to depend on grants if international coffee prices would cover their costs of production and permit their families an ethical standard of living. However, the “fair” compensation that is demanded in the capitalist system will never truly be fair. The system functions by the capitalist stealing from the worker. The surplus value that the capitalist extracts is then reinvested to create another commodity and more surplus value when the commodity is sold. Fridell argues that fair trade is similar to “conventional consumerism and reproduces many of its negative effects” (2007, 87). Fair trade is no radical break from the past mode of exchange; it attempts to mask the inequality that is inherent in the capitalist system.

A report from one of the caracoles explains that they have examined steps to commercialize products fairly with solidarity networks but realize the capitalism is always an impediment (Baronnet et al. 2011, 437). Thus, the following dilemma ensues: preserving the total autonomous integrity of their projects, the Zapatista community risks the migration of part of their support basis for work due to economic needs (440). Furthermore, the Zapatista autonomous communities are still inserted in commercial market relations (444). This is to say that they are always competing with capitalist production. Nevertheless, part of the Zapatista’s task is creating an example for another mode of exchange and garnering the support from global civil society.

The Mexican Solidarity Network's optimism exists in the belief that if people are aware of the contrasting circumstances of production (corporate vs. cooperative), a moral element will be inserted into the market relationship. The cooperative model of production is horizontal and thus more democratic. Some of the cooperatives in the Zapatista communities have succeeded in finding partner collectives in other countries, such as Café Campesino, that support fairer prices and an alternative structure in the work place. The Mexican Solidarity network asserts that the living standards of members of cooperatives are substantially improved, while reminding us that cooperatives are "...supporting genuine alternatives to capitalism in the long term."

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Although grassroots organizations that develop independently from the state have the potential to build horizontal relationships and improve the living standards of those involved, the multiple challenges that they face must not be ignored. Vásquez-León discusses how the grassroots Agrarian Christian Leagues in Paraguay were violently repressed by the militaristic state, charged with advocating communism (2010, 6). Likewise, autonomous Zapatista communities have confronted violent harassment and occupation of their territory by state paramilitary forces (Muñoz 2006, 255). Since 1995 the increase of paramilitary forces has resulted in hundreds of deaths and political prisoners along with tens of thousands displaced (Speed and Reyes 2005, 65). Moreover paramilitary presence disturbs customary forms of social organization and production. For example, in 2000 MutVitz recorded harassment at checkpoints and even the killing of many of its members by paramilitaries (Martinez-Torres 2006, 108). Additionally, the

military has attacked Zapatista communities. On December 22, 1997 PRI affiliated armed troops attacked and killed 45 indigenous people in a church in Acteal, Chiapas. Events such as these garner more international attention and oftentimes support. An Indigenous Dignity March took place in 2001 in Mexico City to pressure the state to pass the Congressional Peace Commission (Cocopa) law (Muñoz 2006, 259). The Zapatista movement has also gained popular support from civil society by allowing for its participation in certain decisions such as what would be debated in negotiations with the Mexican state.

Since 1994, Mexico has expanded its military budget by 40% (Ibid. 265). Additionally, since 1997 the U.S. has increased its military support to Mexico to about \$112 million and helped train Mexican soldiers following a report by the US state department that characterized the Mexican military as unprepared to confront the Zapatista rebels (267). This is no coincidence; rather it proves that states do not want to interrupt the flow of capital. Perhaps Chase Manhattan Bank's Emerging Markets Group expressed publicly what the state could not express in their following statement: "Chiapas...does not pose a fundamental threat to Mexican political stability, it is perceived to be so by many in the investment community. The government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and of security policy" (Muñoz 2006, 266). New York's financial sector expressed similar sentiments, advising President Zedillo to eliminate the Zapatistas before the Mexican economy could be bailed out (Ibid).

Along with the increased militarization, the state of Chiapas has been overwhelmed with funds for development projects (Martinez-Torres 2006, 68). As one

man in La Garrucha (caracol III) explained, the financing of the development projects is another part of the same “guerra sucia” (dirty war) that the government continues to wage on the Zapatistas in order to divide the people. The government offers money for education and healthcare to those people who agree to separate themselves from the Zapatistas movement. A household in La Garrucha that was supported by the government had the letters painted on the outside of their house, “En mi hogar hay piso firme,” (in my house there is firm ground), followed by the government logo and the words “vivir mejor,” (live better). Since the Zapatista uprising, both the state and federal government have supported numerous peasant organizations as long as their members promised not to become Zapatistas (Ibid. 68). Martinez-Torres notes that the introduction of more government funds has evoked much fragmentation within communities and organizations. Still, the Zapatista movement persists yet their organization has been continuously challenged by the capitalist nation state.

## CONCLUSION

I started this research by examining the political philosophy of Kojin Karatani. Karatani theorizes the capitalist nation state through *modes of exchange*, three in particular. The first mode of exchange (A) comes into existence within communities and occurs through reciprocity of gift and return (Karatani 2008, 574). Mode of exchange A is reciprocal but not free. Mode of exchange B prevails between communities through plunder and redistribution and thus is neither reciprocal nor free (575). Mode of exchange C is commodity exchange, which takes place both within and between communities (579). Lastly, mode of exchange C is free but not reciprocal. Karatani employs Marx to explain commodity exchange where the capitalist continually extracts surplus value from the worker in order to be able to reinvest surplus into the creation of another commodity (584).

These three modes of exchange come together to form the capitalist nation state, which Karatani depicts as a Borromean ring of interlocking and mutually-reinforcing powers. It follows that it is impossible to overthrow one ring (Karatani 2008, 585). Why work to transcend the capitalist nation state? To answer this question, Karatani turns to Kant's moral imperative: "act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (Karatani 2003, 216). One consequence of the capitalist mode of production is that it forces us to treat others as mere means to an end. These "others" that Kant refers to could also refer to past or future generations that should not be ignored. How do we want to leave the world that we inherited to the people not yet in existence? This brings us to a

second critique of capital, namely the environmental limits to this relentless accumulation.

Due to the ethical problems and environmental limits that we will face so long as we live in the current social formation, Karatani argues that we must allow a fourth mode of exchange (which he refers to as X or association) to exist as a regulative idea (2003, xi). Although a regulative idea refers to one that cannot be achieved, if we strive to implement the regulative idea, it will serve as a guiding practice for us. Ergo, Karatani calls upon us to nurture the transcendence of the capitalist nation state, replacing it with a free and reciprocal form of exchange—upon which to reorganize society.

My research aims to bring Karatani's claims to bear upon a specific social movement, i.e., that of the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico. On January 1, 1994 the Zapatistas invaded four towns in Chiapas, Mexico (Womack 1999, 42), demanding *basta* or enough (Collier 2005, 2). On this day the Zapatistas spoke to all Mexicans describing their discontent with the capitalist nation state, which has been waging war on them for hundreds of years. Capitalism requires the capitalist to invest his or her money (M) to create a commodity (C) that is then sold for more money (M'). This new money is reinvested to complete the cycle again. The surplus value created in this cycle comes from the exploitation of labor and the plundering of resources. Ergo, since its birth, the capitalist nation state has depended upon colonialism and slavery for the attainment of surplus value that it requires. The Mexican state of Chiapas has been impoverished and split since the Spanish colonial era, during which the indigenous Maya people were forced to pay taxes to the state and serve as laborers for the ladino elites. This ongoing exploitation is evidenced by the conditions in Chiapas; indigenous communities are more



likely to live in inferior conditions (Díaz-Polanco 1997, 83; see also Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 314). For example, houses tend to be crowded, as well as lack roofs, electricity, tubed water, and drainage. The implementation of NAFTA, once again, demonstrated the capitalist nation state's disregard for the indigenous people of Chiapas.

The capitalist nation state has been able to maintain this constant war against the indigenous people by employing the myth of modernity. The myth of modernity, as described by Dussel refers to "[o]ne defin[ing] one's own culture as superior and more developed and the other as inferior, crude, barbaric, and culpably *immature*" (1995, 64). Many *coletos* in San Cristobal de Las Casas were utterly astonished when the *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) invaded their town. The *coletos*' continual engagement of the myth of modernity can explain their total shock seeing that the indigenous people had in fact organized themselves. However, the roots of the Zapatismo were established long before the 1994 public uprising.

My basic contention is that, read through the lens of Karatani's analysis, the rebellion occurred in Chiapas because the indigenous people were retaliating against a capitalist nation state that is set against them. Zapatismo hopes to thwart neoliberalism's homogenizing pressure that only allows space for one dominant rationale (Mignolo 1997, 3). Thus, the Zapatistas strive to convert fragmentation into a universal project. In an attempt to elude the hegemonic state project that has excluded them for years, the Zapatistas demand autonomy. Autonomy, as described by Díaz-Polanco, is an open and democratic model that is not exclusive or intolerant (1997, 34). Instead a myriad of lifestyles and forms of social organization coexist and respect one another. Autonomous organization provides the opportunity to cease the perverse pairing that binds ethnicity

and marginalization by allowing the indigenous people to preserve and reproduce their communal organization (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 16). In essence, the initiation of autonomous communities, municipalities, and regions enables the creativity needed to reimagine a society outside of the capitalist nation state. Ergo, through the formation of autonomous communities, the Zapatistas are conceivably taking the first steps to achieving Karatani's vision of a social formation that is both free and reciprocal.

The Mexican state aims to assimilate and absorb the indigenous into Mexican nationals through the forces of public education, state protection, and economic development (Gilly 1997, 45) that are coercive and hegemonic. This dialectic allows the Mexican state to claim inclusion through multiculturalism while, at the same time, refusing to recognize indigenous' autonomy. For example, the Mexican government ignores the communal organization of communities and forces Spanish as the dominant language through education. Also, the Mexican state fails to accept that many of its nationals have experienced distinct pasts. Centuries of oppression and diverse modes of survival have led to separate visions and particular versions of a history that cannot be treated as homogenous (44). One way in which this cultural dispossession has taken place is when the histories of numerous indigenous communities are taken by the state and reconstructed into a common past, belonging to all Mexicans, to justify the fight for independence and later the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

Since the 1994 public uprising, the Zapatistas have continued to build their autonomy unilaterally, despite the Mexican government's failure to implement the San Andrés Accords in 1995 (Speed and Reyes 2005, 56, 60). The Zapatistas have successfully created programs such as health, education and cooperative projects. More

recently, in 2003, the Zapatistas attempted to materialize their autonomy at the regional level with the creation of five *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Barmeyer 2009, 61). The *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* strive to set up horizontal spaces, through the establishment of assemblies, that allow for greater participation (Baronnet et al. 2011, 30). The autonomous government obeys the demands brought forth by assemblies.

By creating autonomous education, the Zapatistas are confronting the state's notion of what it means to be Mexican. Nation states build the very idea of citizenship based upon an assumption that there is equality between all individuals, which disregards the unequal social structures that confine society (Baronnet et al. 2011, 115). The constitution of liberal citizens is contingent upon the state helping to maintain nationalism throughout its populous by fabricating a shared history, culture and language (Barmeyer 2009, 5). The Zapatistas are reclaiming their right to recognize their own understanding of society, one that involves a questioning of the exclusive notion of citizenship that is a product of the state (Baronnet et al. 2011, 116). The Zapatistas are not attempting to secede from Mexico; instead they are requesting to be included and respected in the Mexican nation without needing to abandon their identity and way of social organization (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 16). Their call for inclusivity is not egocentric; instead the Zapatistas call for “un mundo en donde quepan muchos mundos” (a world in which many worlds fit) (Baronnet et al. 2011, 521). This means that the Zapatista movement appreciates that there are a multitude of people that suffer due to the exclusion emanated by the capitalist nation state.

In its 6th declaration from the Lacandon Jungle, the Zapatistas called for “la otra campaña” (the other campaign), hoping to unite with global civil society to set up an

alliance for a horizontal approach to politics (Baronnet et al. 2011, 35). To advance and strengthen their internal organization, the Zapatistas realize the importance of connecting their struggle with other local, regional, national, and international battles against the homogenizing capitalist nation state (Ocampo & Cortés 2007, 89). The EZLN does not try to produce one transnational identity or culture. Rather the Zapatista movement strives to evoke a transnational consciousness while still supporting the pluralities that it has sought to defend from the start. The Zapatistas have triumphed, nationally, in rallying Mexicans against the PRI as well as, internationally, in amassing the attention of the Left and working class to build a coalition against neoliberalism (50).

Thus, following Kantian logic, it appears that Zapatismo has embraced the transcendence of the capitalist nation state as a regulative idea, that which guides practice. Nourishing a distinct social organization while the current social formation remains intact requires much strength. Nation, state, and capital emerge in such a way to form a mutually reinforcing triadic structure that Karatani refers to as a Borromean ring (2008, 585). Therefore, since its coming together, the capitalist nation state is so deeply rooted that it attacks our creativity, making it nearly impossible to imagine a society without nation, state, and capital in existence. Moreover, even when social movements have succeeded in garnering the imagination necessary to transcend the current social formation, they are at once constantly confronting it. In the case of the Zapatista movement this opposition is evidenced by the paramilitary and military state attacks on the Zapatista communities. In addition, the Mexican government has tried to break the Zapatista movement apart by providing social programs only to non-Zapatistas. Despite

these constant challenges, the EZLN has remained resilient, bringing to light the theoretical faith that is required for the transcendence of the capitalist nation state.

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